

# **MONTHLY PAYMENTS**

A Play of One Scene, in Six Acts, by Thomas Baines

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## **A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY**

In Monthly Payments, I have endeavoured to create a play full of drama. But not that alone, for I hope to have included wit and humour in the right places. It has a plot that includes unfaithfulness, deceit, betrayal and blackmail. There is however a touch of the supernatural involved – this concerns the remote hand control unit for a television set, which is an essential feature in the play's development. All actions take place in the lounge of the house of Raymond and Pamela Brown.

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## A DETAILED SYNOPSIS

### The Scene is the lounge of the Brown's home

#### ACT ONE

Raymond Brown arrives home from a hard day at the office. The dialogue with his wife indicates that his marriage is more or less a happy one. Though a little brittle, he is definitely not a brute – he is in fact seen to be a typical henpecked husband.

Raymond receives a telephone call (alone), and we judge that it contains threats.

Their best friends, Esme and Gerald, arrive. ... Esme worries greatly about Gerald, especially now they have found out he has a kidney complaint, possibly due to drinking too much alcohol. He is starting a period of enforced abstinence, which he doesn't like one little bit. A reluctant Raymond suffers a sympathetic dry evening, as do the wives. ... Esme suspects that Gerald fancies 'the ladies' – she being immediately suspicious of him over an innocent remark made by Pamela. Esme tends to domineer him.

The Brown's have a new television set. Raymond shows Gerald a special feature – the portable remote hand control unit has an extra button – he doesn't know what it is for. ... He presses the button and immediately the other three present fall asleep whilst retaining their original poses. When he presses the button again they awaken and carry on as though nothing has happened. Raymond keeps his discovery a secret, and during the Act makes good use of it to have booze without Pamela knowing. He also uses it as a temporary refuge from stressful situations.

#### ACT TWO

Act Two introduces a Clergyman (Richardson), who calls uninvited on the grounds that he is taking over the parish from its incumbent – he says he wishes to meet his new flock at their homes. Raymond is alone when he calls. ... The man is not a clergyman – he is an imposter, being the one who threatened Raymond over the phone – in fact, a blackmailer! ... The Clergyman proceeds to blackmail Raymond over a sordid affair he had with a young woman. He frightens Raymond, who, after some negotiations is talked into paying four hundred and fifty pounds in monthly payments over the next six years.

Raymond is desperate – he presses *that* button, thus putting the Clergyman to sleep. He searches his pockets and extracts a wallet, notebook and diary. He then copies entries from each before putting them back. He also brings a portable tape recorder into the room. This is then set to record the remainder of their conversation from a hidden position.

The Clergyman is awakened from his slumbers by Raymond pressing *that* button again. Raymond then fully reviews the details of the blackmail with him, before finally agreeing to the terms. ... He shocks the Clergyman by telling him he knows his real name and address (found from the contents of wallet etc). The Clergyman is just demanding to know how Raymond found out, when he is interrupted by the sound of the front door bell. ... It is Pamela, who has returned unexpectedly – she is shocked to see the clergyman there, though Raymond doesn't notice this. Raymond is in a very

tense condition and as a result suddenly develops stomach cramps. Pamela takes him upstairs, to lie down.

There follows a tense scene between Pamela and the Clergyman – he had seduced her whilst she was on a holiday some years before. She becomes very ashamed and upset about it, dreading that Raymond could find out. The Clergyman's true nature is made apparent, though he doesn't tell her the real reason why he is there.

Raymond eventually returns, and after exchanging mock-pleasant farewells the Clergyman leaves. Raymond does not tell Pamela the real reason for the visit. ... The tape recorder has been kept running in the recording mode.

### ACT THREE

The Brown's, together with Esme and Gerald, have been out to a dance. They have returned to the Brown's house for a late night chat.

After a time Raymond decides to tell Gerald all about the blackmailer. In order to do this he presses *that* button, therefore putting the other three to sleep. Gerald is awakened by being violently shaken by Raymond. ... He is shocked, initially by the revelation about the button facility and then by the details of the blackmail. ... He is later stunned by Raymond revealing that a list of names in the Clergyman's notebook contained his. In view of this, Gerald admits he had used a business client's money and as a result was paying the blackmailer three hundred and fifty pounds a month. ... They are both agreed in no uncertain way, that something drastic has got to be done about that man! But defer any decision for the time being.

The women are awakened, and a kind of normality returns.

### ACT FOUR

It is Saturday morning. Raymond has gone to play golf. Pamela is sat having a cup of tea. The front door bell is heard being rung in an impatient manner. Pamela goes and answers it.

She returns accompanied by a distraught Esme – who explains that Raymond is in fact round at her house. She had eavesdropped and heard Gerald and he discussing how to deal with a blackmailer. She pleading with Pamela: "But they both sounded desperate. We've got to stop them! ... They've got to be stopped!" ... Gerald had previously admitted to her that he is paying the blackmail money.

Pamela decides to take immediate action – she phones Raymond and tells him: "Raymond! I know what's been going on. You come home – right away!" ... Esme leaves before he arrives.

A panic-stricken Raymond arrives – he thinks she has learned about his sordid affair, and therefore immediately confesses. ... Pamela is enraged and very upset. ... After she has made a hurried departure from the room, he phones Gerald and tells him that they should go ahead as planned. ... The Act ends as he begins to make another phone call.

### ACT FIVE

An annoyed Richardson arrives (not dressed as a clergyman this time) in response to a threatening phone call from Raymond.

Raymond tells him about the tape recording and then proceeds to play it to him. ... Richardson is obviously shocked as he hears it. But then his cruel nature is very evident – he insisting that they should also listen to the part of the recording where Pamela came into the room (Raymond had not previously not played this part). ... Raymond is

almost insane with rage when he hears what the recording reveals. He rushes across and starts to assault Richardson – using the TV remote control unit as a weapon.

A Police Inspector and a Constable dash in and separate them. Raymond had arranged that they listened outside the door. ... Richardson is led away under arrest.

After they have gone, a very distressed Pamela comes in. She was supposed to have gone out – in fact, she had been listening to the proceedings from outside the partially-open room window. ... There is a tense scene between Raymond and her. But this suddenly terminates as she collapses – she had taken a drugs overdose before she came in. A very distressed Raymond urgently phones for an ambulance.

## ACT SIX

It is a few months later. ... The two couples enter the lounge. They have been attending the last day of Richardson's trial – he was found guilty and jailed accordingly. Everybody is relieved that the ordeal is over.

Raymond and Gerald discuss the agonies of having to give evidence from the witness box, but express satisfaction that they had been there without their identities being revealed. ... Everybody is in a joyful mood. Then after some questions about the recording, Raymond decides to tell the ladies about that button on the TV remote control unit. He tries to give a practical demonstration, but much to the amusement of the ladies, it doesn't work. It had most likely been preciously damaged in the struggle with Richardson. The ladies laugh and accuse the men of playing a joke on them.

Whilst the other two are out of the room preparing refreshments, Raymond hands Gerald the control unit, who tries to fix it by giving it a sharp knock – it cures the trouble. ... They don't inform the ladies when they return with refreshments from the kitchen.

The refreshments are served. ... Just as Esme has taken a cup of tea to Gerald:

*(Author's Note: The following is taken from the actual script.)*

*ESME takes GERALD his cup of tea. ... As she returns to the table, she hesitates, looks back, and then says to Gerald:*

**ESME:** Sorry, darling, but I forgot your biscuits.

**GERALD:** That's all right, dear.

*HE starts to rise to his feet, but is stopped by her saying:*

**ESME:** Don't get up. I'll bring them to you.

*She gets a small plate of biscuits off the table and takes it across to Gerald. ... Just as she is about to go back she notices the remote control unit on the arm of the chair. She at once picks it up. ... GERALD looks horrified as she then suddenly swings round, holding the unit out in front of herself, pointing it at the TV set. And with a finger poised over 'that' button, she proclaims in a loud voice:*

**ESME:** And now I'm going to put you all to sleep! ... Tyrr-arh! Tyrr-arh!

*PAMELA at once swings her head towards her, her face having a surprised and smiling look. ... RAYMOND looks up in sheer panic. ... GERALD seems frightened to death.*

*ESME quickly presses 'that' button. ... The OTHER THREE of course are at once asleep, their facial expressions being retained. ... ESME immediately appears to*

*be in a state of shock. She then, with a look of open-mouthed amazement, slowly stares at the other three in turn as she slowly edges backwards towards her chair. This done, the realization of it all suddenly strikes her.*

*She gives a great shudder then exclaims in a loud voice:*

**ESME:** Oh, my God!

*She drops the control unit on the floor, and promptly collapses back on to her chair – in a dead faint.*

*The Stage Curtains **CLOSE**.*

## **END OF PLAY**

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## CAST & PROPS

### THE CAST

#### Raymond and Pamela Brown.

They are a respectable-appearing slightly upper middle-class married couple in their early fifties. Each has a pleasing appearance, bordering on being physically attractive to the opposite sex – though he is not actually handsome and she is not the type who could readily 'turn heads'. They appear to be a staid couple, with her tending to control his mildly voluble temperament – she also tends to nag him.

#### Gerald and Esme Watson.

Gerald and Esme are married, being about the same ages as Pamela and Raymond – that is, in their early fifties. They have similar backgrounds to the Brown's, and being the best of friends, share the same type of interests. He is rather good-looking and normally has a rather hesitant type of disposition. She is thin and rather plain – but she rules him, and being of a jealous nature is readily suspicious of him regarding other women.

#### Clergyman – Reverend Harold Frobisher (Desmond Arthur Richardson).

He is a large pleasant-looking man in his late forties. Though he first appears to be a smiling and gentle being, much in keeping with an expected presentation of a minister of the established church (wears a clerical collar in Act 2), he is nothing of the kind. Richardson is in fact a seducer of women and a cultured con man. I visualize the actor to play him to be a middle-aged version of the deceased actor Charles Gray.

#### Two other Characters (minor roles) – both only appear in Act 5:

##### Police Inspector Carter.

He is tall and slim (rain coated, but not in uniform).

##### A uniformed Police Constable, named Dawson.

He has no lines to speak.

### PROPOSED PROPS INCLUDE:

There is only one scene, it being the lounge of a middle-class type home. ... Included (*ideally*) are:

A main three-seater settee and two single-seater settee type chairs (*not the low soft types that are uneasy to get up from*).

A room entry door . This, on the right-hand side rear of stage, is for access to and from the hall – it can be seen by the audience . *Note: I have also used this door for access to and from the kitchen (via the hall). If thought an improvement, then a second door (open) can be added specifically for this purpose.*

A sideboard.

Four small tables (one either end of the main settee, one next to each of the single-seater chairs).

A window with opening curtains (the window is capable of being slightly opened (Act 5)).

A television set. Which, when on, has the bright blank screen (visible to the audience?). It has a portable remote hand control unit, which is normally kept on the table at Raymond's end of the main settee.

A telephone and the sound of it ringing.

A telephone directory.

A portable tape recorder. With cassette tape (in case) – microphone with a lead – power supply extension lead – both with suitable end plugs. ... Also, edited tape recordings of Act 2 discussions between Raymond and the Clergyman are used in Acts 3 and 5.

A wall-mounted power point close to the window (the tape recorder is to be plugged into it by Raymond).

Room lights wall switches. These are near to the hall door.

A writing desk with normal chair. On which sits the telephone and a telephone directory.

A drinks cabinet, with drinks and glasses.

A newspaper rack with magazines and a newspaper.

A wall mirror, somewhere near to the hall door.

Vase full of flowers.

Tray, with four cups and saucers – tea, coffee, etc.

Tray with biscuits and snacks on plates for four people.

Man's pocket wallet, small notebook, pocket diary and comb. All inside the pockets of the CLERGYMAN'S jacket (page 28).

Various personal items as required – such as handkerchiefs and a handbag.

Notebook and ballpoint pen – originally in writing desk drawer.

The sound of a front door bell being rung.

The sound of a front door knocker being banged.





## MONTHLY PAYMENTS

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### ACT ONE

*The Stage Curtains **SLOWLY OPEN** to reveal the SET is a house lounge. The window curtains are closed – it is night-time, the room is in darkness. The sudden appearance of chinks of light around the room's entry door indicates that the hall light has been turned on. ... The entrance door from the hall (right-hand side rear of stage) is seen to open and RAYMOND is briefly silhouetted by the hall light as he enters the room.*

*The room's lights suddenly come on. ... RAYMOND is seen coming away from the entry doorway, having just turned on the lights at the adjacent wall-mounted switch – the door has now been left open. He is wearing his office suit, complete with raincoat – and carrying an executive-type briefcase. ... He flings the briefcase on to an adjacent chair, then takes off the raincoat and also flings it there. ... He unfastens the button of his jacket, sits down on the main settee, leans forward, slides off his shoes and throws them in the general direction of the raincoat and the briefcase – they land on the floor (we hope). ... He is apparently in a bad mood as he stalks to the drinks cabinet. Once there, he grabs an empty glass from the cabinet and pours a large measure of gin into it followed by a small amount of tonic water.*

*After taking a large gulp of the drink – he exclaims to himself:*

**RAYMOND:** God, how I needed that! ... That bloody idiot, Jenkinson!

*RAYMOND is just walking back to the settee, when into the room walks PAMELA, who is dressed in a smart two-piece outfit. ... RAYMOND sits on the settee (drink in hand).*

**PAMELA:** You're late! ... Didn't I hear you shouting something?

**RAYMOND:** Yes! I was cursing to myself. We had another bloody contract meeting today and Jenkinson was in the chair. ... He's nothing but an ignorant loud-mouthed bastard! God knows how he became general manager! ... Him and his dictatorial —.

*More annoyed than shocked, she interrupts:*

**PAMELA:** Really! What have I told you about your swearing? You seem to be doing it more than ever recently.

*RAYMOND scowls at her.*

*Looking around the room, and on seeing the clothes on the chair:*

**PAMELA:** Why don't you ever hang up your clothes instead of throwing them down?

*PAMELA immediately goes to pick up the clothes, but before she reaches them she*

*has a slight trip (we hope) – one of the discarded shoes being the cause.*

*Then:*

**PAMELA:** Really, this is too much! ... Who else would fling his shoes anywhere on the floor?

*Cynically:*

**RAYMOND:** I'm given to understand it's the in-thing. Even the prime minister does it – frequently!

**PAMELA:** Oh, very clever!

*She quickly bends to pick up a shoe.*

*Suddenly annoyed:*

**RAYMOND:** Oh leave the bloody things! I'll pick them up later.

*Equally annoyed, and holding the shoe:*

**PAMELA:** If I don't they will just be left – you never tidy up after yourself. How that first wife of yours put up with you, I'll never know!

*A little sarcastically:*

**RAYMOND:** Her name is Sonia – why do you always have to refer to her as 'that first wife of yours'?

*Cynically:*

**PAMELA:** Because, I can never forget how you decei...

*As she starts to retaliate she is clearly seen to glance at her wristwatch – this causes her to break off from her delivery and immediately change tack:*

**PAMELA:** ... Just look at the time – Gerald and Esme will be here soon – and I haven't finished preparing the food!

*As PAMELA quickly picks up Raymond's discarded items and then is exiting:*

**PAMELA:** You had better hurry up and get changed. ... And make sure that you don't have too much to drink when they're here! ... I don't know what's come over you – you've changed so much in the last few days.

*As she goes from view, RAYMOND sits back – and is just about have a drink from his glass when he stops, being interrupted by PAMELA shouting from immediate Off-Stage, as she walks away:*

**PAMELA (voice):** And don't start talking politics with Gerald – you were positively rude to him last time when he told you he was going to vote for the Liberals!

*RAYMOND'S immediate reaction is give an exasperated look in her exited direction and raise his hand, using it to give a mocking jaw-jaw-jaw sign. ... He takes a drink from his glass. Then leaning forward, glass held loosely between his hands, he stares slightly ahead at the floor – obviously in worried thought about something. This pose is held for about twelve seconds. ... After giving a worried*

*glance in the direction that Pamela has taken, he slowly puts the glass on an adjacent small table and takes an envelope from his jacket's inside pocket. Taking out the letter it contains, he reads it – not really reading, but staring at it in a very worried way – giving a couple of nervous glances as he does so in case Pamela suddenly appears.*

*About fifteen seconds later his thoughts are interrupted by the sound of the room's telephone bell ringing. ... It takes a few seconds for him to be fully aware what the sound is. ... Putting the envelope and letter on the table, he picks up the glass and finishes the drink in one gulp, puts down the glass, then without any undue haste walks across to the telephone.*

*On lifting the telephone receiver, he says in a somewhat disinterested voice:*

**RAYMOND:** Hello, Central 276932!

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, 276932.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Yes it is. Who's calling?

*p*

*Startled:*

**RAYMOND:** Oh my God! It's you!

*Nervously glancing Off-Stage (Pamela's exit direction), he exclaims in a tense way:*

**RAYMOND:** Wh-What do you want?

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, yes – I got the letter.

*As he then listens to what the caller has to say, his look gradually changes to one of fear ... then shouts "Oh-no!" on a couple of occasions as he continues to listen. Finally he shouts into the mouthpiece:*

**RAYMOND:** You can't mean that! Who the hell are you? How did you find ou—.

*He suddenly breaks off and looks shocked as, still listening, he obviously receives further alarming information ... Then after giving a couple of nervous glances in Pamela's Off-Stage direction, he is obviously enraged – exclaiming:*

**RAYMOND:** Fifty thousand? Fifty thousand pounds? ... I haven't got anything like that amount. ... You can go to hell!

*His tense and angry looks gradually become subdued as he listens for quite a few seconds – occasionally exclaiming: "But, but". ... Finally, with a couple of submissive nods he says in a subdued voice:*

**RAYMOND:** Yes-yes, all right.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** I know the place.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, next Friday, at seven.

*He, with thoughtful deliberation, puts down the telephone receiver, and is almost in a daze as he slowly walks back to the small table. ... He picks up his glass, goes to the drinks cabinet and pours himself another drink. ... After taking a gulp from the*

*glass he goes back to his seat – there to sit once again leaning forward with the glass held loosely between his hands. He is obviously very worried.*

*It is about ten seconds later that he is disturbed by PAMELA suddenly entering the room, she carrying a vase full of flowers (though RAYMOND carries-on just staring ahead).*

*She is surprised and annoyed to see him still there – exclaiming as she goes to put the vase on the sideboard:*

**PAMELA:** Really! I thought you were upstairs getting ready.

*Raymond is still sat, acting as though she isn't there.*

*As she comes away from the sideboard:*

**PAMELA:** Surely! That's not another drink you've g—.

*Breaking off her delivery, she asks in a concerned way:*

**PAMELA:** ... What's wrong? ... You're not ill again? ... Raymond! Raymond! What's wrong with you?

*This brings him out of his stupor:*

**RAYMOND:** Oh, no – th-there's nothing wrong with me. ... It-It's just worrying about today's meeting, that's all.

*Slightly aggressively:*

**PAMELA:** You didn't say anything stupid there, did you? I know how you can be when you lose that temper of yours.

**RAYMOND:** No, no – it's, it's just that it will result in me having a lot of sorting out to do.

**PAMELA:** As long as that's all it is. ... I do worry about you, you know. After all, remember what Doctor Mason said about you getting too wound-up about things.

**RAYMOND:** Oh it's nothing like that – I was just trying to plan what changes will be required as a result of Jenkinson's directives.

**PAMELA:** Try not to think about it. ... Come-on, hurry up and get changed, they'll be here soon – I've laid out your things on the bed.

*Standing, and after finishing his drink:*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, all right – I won't be long.

*Before he can move off:*

**PAMELA:** Please promise me that you won't have too much to drink when they come – after all, you must have had at least two since you came in.

**RAYMOND:** Yes, yes – I promise.

*As, carrying the empty glass, he makes his way out of the room, PAMELA notices the envelope and letter. She at once goes and picks them up. Then as she holds them in her hand, says:*

**PAMELA:** Darling! You've forgotten your letter.

*RAYMOND, who is almost Off-Stage, stops dead in his tracks. ... He tries to hide any signs of alarm as he goes back. ... Then taking them off her, he says:*

**RAYMOND:** Thank you, dear.

*He places the glass on an adjacent table, then puts the letter in the envelope and puts them in his jacket's inside pocket. ... Picking up the glass, he then walks Off-Stage.*

*PAMELA gives an obvious worried look as she watches him depart. ... She, after glancing at her wristwatch, goes to the newspaper rack, takes out a magazine and sits on the settee in order to read it. ... After she has been reading for about ten seconds the faint sound of the front door bell is heard from the direction of the hall. ... She puts the magazine back in the paper rack and goes to answer the door – but not before she quickly looks in the wall mirror in order to check that her hair is straight.*

*From the hall she is heard to shout (Off Stage):*

**PAMELA (voice):** Raymond! Raymond! They're here. ... And don't offer Gerald any peanuts – he ate the lot last time!

*There is a pause then we hear the babble women's of voices – progressively getting louder as they approach.*

*As ESME walks in, followed by PAMELA and GERALD:*

**PAMELA:** Raymond's upstairs, getting changed. He won't be long.

**ESME:** Yes I know, we heard you shouting to him.

*PAMELA looks slightly embarrassed.*

*PAMELA sits on the main settee – GERALD and ESME sit on the adjacent settee chairs.*

*Then after a short pause:*

**PAMELA:** You haven't said a word, Gerald – is anything the matter?

**GERALD:** Well, em, I-I —.

*Interrupting:*

**ESME:** He's been to see the doctor. You know how I pestered him to go for a check-up – well, it's a good job I did! We've had the results of the hospital tests ... You tell her, Gerald!

**GERALD:** Well, em. Em, I-I've got trouble with my kidneys. I've-I've got to give up —.

*Interrupting:*

**ESME:** He's got to give up his drinking! ... You know how I was always telling him to cut it down. Well, now he's got to give it up altogether – or else!

*Genuinely concerned:*

**PAMELA:** Oh I am sorry to hear it. ... Are you going to be all right, Gerald?

**GERALD:** Ye-yes. The doctor said that if I keep to total abstinence I should get better.

*Bitterly:*

**ESME:** That's why he looks so miserable – he can't have his drink! ... At least it should save him from making a fool of himself like he usu—.

*Interrupting:*

**PAMELA:** Really, Esme! I've never seen Gerald in that condition.

*Now a little regretful:*

**ESME:** Well, em, yes. ... I'm sorry, Gerald – but you know how I worried about your drinking.

*There is a short embarrassing silence.*

*Then changing the subject – after clearing his throat:*

**GERALD:** Em, I-I hear that 'old Critchley, the undertaker, is to retire.

**PAMELA:** It's about time he did. How old is he?

**GERALD:** He must be well over —.

*Interrupting in a concerned way:*

**ESME:** Heaven knows what we're going to do when his father comes!

*Puzzled:*

**PAMELA:** His father?

**ESME:** Yes – Gerald's father! ... He's virtually an alcoholic!

**GERALD:** I say, steady on – he's not that bad!

**ESME:** I suppose we'll have to provide him with his usual – we can't tell him about Gerald – it would worry him to death. ... There's only one thing for it – ours will have to be cold tea from the whisky bottle.

*As GERALD grimaces, RAYMOND enters the room, wearing a smart sports coat and trousers and sporting a golf club tie. ... RAYMOND exchanges greetings with the guests then walks across to Esme, giving her a mock-affectionate kiss on the cheek.*

*Then as he looks about himself:*

**RAYMOND:** The usual starters, I suppose?

**GERALD:** No, no thanks – I'll have a lemonade.

**ESME:** He's on the wagon – doctor's orders!

**GERALD:** Y-Yes, I-I've got a kidney complaint. From now on it's strictly TT. Esme's joining me.

**ESME:** Don't think I'm doing it because I feel sorry for him. No! He has threatened that if he ever sees me with a drink, then he'll have one too! ... Make it two lemonades please, Raymond.

*There is a pregnant silence, then:*

**RAYMOND:** Em, sorry to hear it.

*As RAYMOND makes his way to the drinks cabinet:*

**PAMELA** (to Raymond): Don't you think it would be a good idea if we *all* kept off the alcohol, just for tonight? It would be such a nice gesture to Esme and Gerald, don't you think?

*As RAYMOND stands still with a kind of stunned expression on his face:*

**GERALD:** No! Please don't! I-I don't want everybody else to suffer.

*ESME just sits there showing a false sweet smile.*

**PAMELA:** Well, Raymond?

*After a self-conscious pause:*

**RAYMOND:** Does anybody want orange squash with their lemonade?

*PAMELA nods, indicating that she would like some orange-lemonade. ... A forlorn-looking GERALD goes cross to help RAYMOND with the drinks. ... They occasionally exchange resigned and knowing looks as they overhear the ladies talking:*

**PAMELA** (to Esme): I've been on to Raymond about the amount *he* drinks – tonight's abstinence will do him good.

**ESME:** Well, if he doesn't watch it he could finish up like Gerald. ... You know that I like a drink as well as anyone. But the amount some people drink – well, really!

**PAMELA:** It's a good job the people at the chapel don't know how much Raymond drinks. Mind you, that old devil, Pastor Morris, never says no whenever he comes here – and that wife of his always frowns if we only give her a single.

**ESME:** Thank goodness it never took a hold on me!



*PAMELA gives a sly and cynical smile that she succeeds in hiding from Esme.*

*GERALD, then RAYMOND, take the drinks across, each handing one to the other's wife, who murmur their muted thanks. ... Once the drinks are handed out, the TWO MEN sit – RAYMOND on the main settee, GERALD back to his original seat.. ... Once they are settled, everyone seems to be waiting for someone else to say something.*

*Then GERALD peers across at Raymond:*

**GERALD:** I say, Raymond, are you feeling all right? You don't look too well. I first noticed when you walked in.

**RAYMOND:** Oh, it's just that I've had a hard day at the office.

**ESME:** Even so, you can't be too careful. Perhaps you should see a doctor. Gerald didn't want to go, but it was only my badgering that made him make an appointment. ... It's a good job he went!

**PAMELA:** I think you are quite right, Esme. ... He worries too much about things – remember last time when things got on top of him?

*There is a short and pregnant silence. ... Then, obviously wanting to change the subject, GERALD quickly glances around the room – he particularly notices the television set.*

**GERALD** (to Raymond): I say! I see you've got a new tele.

**RAYMOND:** Yes, and it's got a special control unit.

*He turns and picks up the remote control unit from the small table at his side of the settee. ... Then says:*

**RAYMOND:** It's the first new one we've had for ages. ... It's a little unusual – it has an extra control button – but I don't know what it's for. I was —.

*Interrupting in a reproachful way:*

**PAMELA:** Surely, you're not going to turn it on?

**RAYMOND:** Oh, no! I was just going to show Gerald this extra button.

*With the unit pointing at the TV set, RAYMOND is clearly seen to press the button. ... Immediately, as the TV screen lights up showing a bright blank screen, the OTHER THREE suddenly just sit still with their eyes closed as though asleep, whilst still retaining their original poses – RAYMOND is clearly amazed as he stares at each in turn. ... After quite a few seconds of perplexed astonishment, he, still retaining much of that state, hesitantly gets up and tries to rouse them by gently shaking each in turn and "calling each of their names" – but to no avail. His initial reactions are now seen to be replaced by obvious puzzlement. ... He slowly walks back to his seat and sits. ... Looking in deep serious thought, he keeps glancing at each of the three sleepers in turn and then at the control unit in his hand. ... After a few seconds, it is apparent that he has decided what to do – he holds the control unit in front of himself, pointing it at the TV set with a finger*

*poised on 'that' button. He takes a deep breath and then presses the button. The affect is immediate, in that the Other THREE open their eyes then carry on as though nothing had happened – RAYMOND tries to hide his amazement. The TV screen is now in the 'off' mode.*

*As the others watch him, GERALD stands up and strolls across to Raymond. ... Standing over him, and taking the control unit out of Raymond's hand, he says:*

**GERALD:** Which button is it?

*RAYMOND hesitantly reaches up and points:*

**RAYMOND:** This one.

*Immediately, GERALD points the control unit at the TV and is clearly seen to press a button on it – the television bright blank screen is seen to come on.*

*(Author's Note:*

*Throughout the play, each time the 'brown' button is pressed on the control unit the TV comes on or off – when 'on', a bright blank screen is seen on the TV – obviously, when 'off', the screen is seen just as that).*

**RAYMOND:** No, this is it – the brown one!

*RAYMOND has quickly reached up and pressed 'that' button. Immediately, the OTHER THREE once again fall asleep whilst still retaining their original poses, with GERALD stood close to Raymond, still holding the control unit. ... RAYMOND looks somewhat amused as he views the three sleeping characters in turn. ... He stands up. This is quite a difficult manoeuvre with Gerald is stood so close to him, but nevertheless he manages to accomplish it without unduly disturbing him. RAYMOND steps past him then stands there deliberating for a few moments. ... After furtive and mischievous glances in the direction of the drinks cabinet he picks up his glass from the table and quickly drinks the lemonade. He then walks across to the drinks cabinet, and with obvious relish proceeds to pour a measure of whisky into his glass.*

*Then after turning and raising his glass towards Pamela he nods his head and says:*

**RAYMOND:** Cheers!

*He takes a gulp from his glass then returns with it to his seat. ... Once seated, after having given a self-satisfied smile at the others in turn, he drains the drink from his glass. He replaces the glass on the table – then with a sly grin on his face, reaches up and presses 'that' button (it is still held by Gerald, pointing towards the TV set). ... At once the Other THREE open their eyes and carry on as though nothing has happened.*

*As RAYMOND withdraws his hand, GERALD glances at the TV – saying:*

**GERALD:** It does nothing. Perhaps it's for use with another model.

*GERALD hands the control unit back to RAYMOND, and then returns to his seat.  
... RAYMOND then replaces the control unit back on the table.*

**ESME** (to Pamela): Did I tell you that Hilda Smith has left Colin?

**PAMELA**: No – I remember you telling me that she was having trouble with him.

*BOTH MEN exchange bored and resigned glances as they have to listen.*

**ESME**: Well, do you remember that she caught him out with that sales girl from Boots?

**PAMELA**: Yes, but she forgave him, didn't she?

**ESME**: She did – the more fool her! ... Well, Hilda's cousin, Jean, went for a meal at 'Bernies – and there, sat with that woman from the newsagents, was Colin – both eating steak and chips!

*In a near-cynical way:*

**PAMELA**: You used to be quite friendly with Colin, didn't you, Gerald?

*GERALD is suddenly and clearly embarrassed – he gulps down the remainder of his drink. ... Trying not to notice a hostile glare from ESME, he is obviously flustered as he replies:*

**GERALD**: Em, em, not really – I-I just used to sit next to him on the Rotary Club committee.

**RAYMOND**: Drinks! – ehm, another lemonade, anybody?

*GERALD gives Raymond a relieved affirmative nod. ESME, still glaring at Gerald, ignores him. There is no reaction from PAMELA. ... RAYMOND stands, and taking his own glass with him, takes GERALD'S glass from his outstretched hand – then proceeds to the drinks cabinet.*

*Whilst RAYMOND is replenishing the glasses. GERALD is obviously conscious that ESME is still glaring at him, he saying:*

**GERALD**: Em, em, I hear that the Reverend Saltley is leaving Saint Marks.

**RAYMOND**: Oh, I am sorry to hear it. He's not a bad old stick, really.

**PAMELA**: He's been there quite a few years. Do you know why he's going?

**GERALD**: I-I understand he —.

*Interrupting in a loud and angry voice as she continues to glare at Gerald:*

**ESME**: I didn't know that you were friendly with Colin Smith! Even when I told you what had been going-on, you never mentioned it!

*Clearly agitated:*

**GERALD**: I-I didn't think it mattered.

**ESME:** Didn't Matter! Didn't Matter! ... What else haven't you told me?

*RAYMOND, obviously embarrassed, gives a shocked-looking Gerald sympathetic glances as he walks across carrying two glasses of lemonade – he gives one to GERALD, then goes and sits down. ... PAMELA is trying to suppress an anticipatory look.*

*Suddenly standing and shouting in a forceful way:*

**GERALD:** To hell with it! I'm going to have a drink. A real drink!

**ESME:** You do, and I leave this house – immediately!

*GERALD is visibly shaken. PAMELA and RAYMOND now look shocked.*

*RAYMOND quickly picks up the television control unit, points it at the TV set and presses 'that' button! ... The OTHER THREE once again fall asleep, whilst retaining their original poses – with GERALD still standing. ... RAYMOND looks in an agitated state as he stands. Then, glass in hand, he walks across to the drinks cabinet, grabs hold of the whisky bottle and takes a swig from it. He takes a deep breath and then looks relieved. ... He drinks the lemonade from the glass, pours in whisky from the bottle – then returns to his seat. ... He then sits there leaning forward with the glass between his hands, being obviously in a contemplative mood as he slowly looks at the others in turn, and occasionally sipping his drink.*

*He soon drains his glass then looks over his shoulder in the direction of the drinks cabinet. ... He starts to rise – but as he does so, gives a sudden glance at the sleeping Pamela. As a result he obviously changes his mind – he shaking his head in a reluctant way and quietly says to himself:*

**RAYMOND:** No. No, I'd better not.

*He then, glass between his hands, again sits, leaning forward staring at the floor in a worried way. ... After a few seconds his thoughts are interrupted by the faint sound of the house front door bell being rung. This distracts him. He glances towards the room's entry door. ... Putting his glass on the table, he stands then starts to walk towards the door. But after taking a few steps, suddenly halts – he is apparently having second thoughts. He quickly glances at the three sleeping characters in turn, and then appears to have come to a decision. The result is that he quickly walks to his seat, sits, and then picks up the control unit from the table.*

*After a quick glance around the room, he points it at the TV set and presses 'that' button – the OTHER THREE immediately awaken, as GERALD, bracing himself, shouts:*

**GERALD:** Go to hell, Esme!

*RAYMOND puts the control unit back on the table – none of the others notice.*

**ESME:** That does it! I'm going home – give me the car keys!

*It is then that Pamela decides to do something about the trouble:*

**PAMELA:** Esme! Gerald! Please stop – it's so unlike you both.

*The immediate effect is that there is a tense silence – this being interrupted by the front door bell again being rung. The troubles are for the time being forgotten as puzzled glances are exchanged.*

**PAMELA:** I wonder who it can be? We aren't expecting anyone.

*As he rises from his seat:*

**RAYMOND:** I'll see who it is.

*As RAYMOND exits, the conflict resumes:*

**ESME:** Give me the keys!

**GERALD:** Sod off, Esme!

**PAMELA:** Esme! Gerald! Please don't! ... I feel responsible. I shouldn't have mentioned about Gerald and Colin.

*Pause, then having calmed-down:*

**GERALD:** Look, Esme. Honestly, I didn't know about Colin's affairs – I swear it! ... I knew he fancied his chances, but he never spoke of his conquests to me. ... I never really knocked around with him – just the odd social drink in the bar at the club – that's all.

*Pause – then with her embarrassment very obvious:*

**ESME:** Em, well, em – perhaps I've been too hasty. I-I think we owe Pamela and Raymond an apology. I—. ... W-What is it Raymond?

*As ESME is speaking, RAYMOND has re-entered the room. ... He looks very solemn as, staring at her, he walks up to Esme and stands close to her, then says:*

**RAYMOND:** It-it's your sister-in-law, Joyce. She's too upset to come in – H-Harvey has had a stroke! ... They've rushed him to the hospital – she couldn't face going there alone wi—.

*Suddenly standing, she, in great anguish, interrupts:*

**ESME:** Oh, my God!

*ESME suddenly stands then looks as though she is going to faint. ... As RAYMOND steps forward in order to comfort her, GERALD rushes across the room in front of him – he takes her in his arms just as she goes limp – then physically supports and comforts her as she starts to cry.*

*After she has calmed down a little:*

**GERALD:** Come – we must go with Joyce to the hospital.

**PAMELA:** Is-Is there anything we can do?

**RAYMOND:** Should we go with you in case Esme is em, em ---

**GERALD:** N-No thanks, we're going to be all right.

*Glancing at Esme, he adds:*

**GERALD:** That's right, isn't it, darling?

*Esme gives a hesitant nod.*

GERALD and RAYMOND then help ESME (sobbing) to slowly walk to the room's entry door. PAMELA follows behind.

When they have all made their exits, the Stage Curtains **CLOSE**.

**END OF ACT ONE**



## ACT TWO

*The Stage Curtains **SLOWLY OPEN.***

*The room lights are on. RAYMOND is at the window waving goodbye through a gap he has made in the closed curtains there. It is dark outside. He then goes and pours himself a small glass of whisky. ... It is with a serious look on his face that he, drink in hand, slowly walks across to sit on the main settee. Once seated, he sits leaning forward with glass in hand, staring thoughtfully at the floor in front of him.*

*After about twelve seconds his thoughts are interrupted by the ringing of the front door bell, which is heard from the direction of the hall. He puts the drink down on the adjacent table then goes to answer the door.*

*After an appropriate time interval, the voices of RAYMOND and another man (CLERGYMAN) are heard, getting progressively louder as they approach the room. ... RAYMOND enters, followed by a large pleasant-looking middle-aged CLERGYMAN. ... RAYMOND indicates that the CLERGYMAN should sit in the chair nearest to the hall door.*

**RAYMOND:** Reverend, ehm – I'm afraid I didn't quite catch your name.

*After sitting, the CLERGYMAN says in an expected and friendly voice:*

**CLERGYMAN:** It's Frobisher! The Reverend John Frobisher. ... I thank you for inviting me into your home. As I was saying when we came in, I am to take over the parish from the Reverend Saltley. Since I'm down here to see him, I thought I would take the opportunity of visiting some of the houses in the parish. The Reverend Saltley of course wanted to accompany me, but I prefer to do such things by myself.

**RAYMOND:** With due respect, I don't know why you chose this house – I'm not a regular churchgoer and my wife belong to a chapel in another parish.

**CLERGYMAN:** My own view is that a church should care not only for its own members. I personally feel a spiritual responsibility for all the people in the parish, irrespective of religion, class or creed. It is my intention to eventually visit every home and make myself known to all God's family.

**RAYMOND:** Yes, of course. I think that is the true Christian spirit.

*As he sits, RAYMOND, without thinking, picks up his glass from the table and with one gulp empties it. ... He quickly realizes that he may have committed a gaffe:*

**RAYMOND:** Oh, I'm sorry! I-I hesitate to ask – but do you drink?

**CLERGYMAN:** Well as a matter of fact, I do indulge a little from time to time.

**RAYMOND:** Good! Would you care for something now?



**CLERGYMAN:** That is very good of you. Yes - I would like a whisky – a double, please.

*RAYMOND tries to hide his look of surprise – then as he makes his way to the drinks cabinet, glass in hand:*

**RAYMOND:** I think I'll have another. ... Em, not that I-I usually drink more than one when at home.

*As RAYMOND is pouring the drinks, the CLERGYMAN, looking about the room, says:*

**CLERGYMAN:** What a delightful room this is.

*Raymond smiles in acknowledgement.*

**CLERGYMAN:** Do you know – it won't be the first time I have lived in this town. I resided here for many years and have been a frequent visitor ever since. Therefore I am no stranger to many of the goings-on. ... You would be surprised if you knew what dark secrets I have learned of.

*RAYMOND has a slightly puzzled look as he walks across and hands his visitor one of the drinks.*

**CLERGYMAN:** Arh, thank you!

*After waiting for RAYMOND to return to his seat then sit:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Do you know, I'm a student of human nature. As a result, nothing any man does surprises me.

**RAYMOND:** Em, w-when do you take over from the Reverend Saltley?

*Ignoring the question, the CLERGYMAN, drink in hand, stands, saying:*

**CLERGYMAN:** We each have our darker side, which we try to hide from everyone. Most of the time we are successful – but now and again we get found out, and then have to pay for our sins.

*Looking distinctly uncomfortable:*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, yes, very interesting. Em, would you like something to —.

*Interrupting:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Getting found out must be one of the most nerve-racking experiences there is. Especially when there is a danger that your misdemeanour could become public knowledge. In some cases it could have catastrophic repercussions, especially on one's family – to say nothing of the social disgrace. ... Don't you agree?

*RAYMOND appears a little anxious as he asks:*

**RAYMOND:** I-I don't know what you're talking about. Is-Is there something you are trying to tell me?

*In a strange and sinister-sounding voice:*

**CLERGYMAN:** I want fifty thousand pounds – or else!

*RAYMOND, visibly shaken, suddenly stands as he exclaims:*

**RAYMOND:** Y-you – it's you! Oh my God!

*He sits and puts his drink on the table – then stares at the Clergyman in an incredulous way.*

*The CLERGYMAN smiles and then once again speaks in his pleasant Clergyman's voice:*

**CLERGYMAN:** I'm afraid I couldn't wait until Friday night. ... My informant told me that your wife goes to the W.I. every Wednesday about this time. So all I had to do was wait in my car until I saw her car leave your drive. ... Incidentally, this is my normal voice, the one I used on the phone was only for dramatic affect.

*RAYMOND looks distressed. He immediately then braces himself and shouts:*

**RAYMOND:** You bastard! How could you be so cruel – so evil?

**CLERGYMAN:** How could I? ... Oh, it's quite simple – I need the money. ... I have expensive tastes, and I'm not too particular how I get it.

**RAYMOND:** You wicked devil! ... Why me? I've never done you any harm!

**CLERGYMAN:** That is beside the point. I am a professional, and am very good at it.

**RAYMOND:** A professional blackmailer!

**CLERGYMAN:** Precisely.

**RAYMOND:** But how the hell did you find out?

*As he sits:*

**CLERGYMAN:** I more often than not, pay for the information. ... In this case, the young lady involved became desperately short of money. She gave an outline of the happenings to a professional acquaintance of mine, especially her forthcoming pregnancy. It didn't take too much cash to get the full story from her.

**RAYMOND:** But I've already told you, I haven't got fifty thousand pounds! Nor can I raise it!

**CLERGYMAN:** I know you haven't – I checked your financial position before I first contacted you. Fifty thousand pounds was only meant to be a frightener. ... You will find that my actual demands are much more reasonable than that.

*Angrily:*

**RAYMOND:** You can go to hell! ... I've thought it over. ... You're not getting a penny from me. Tell who you like – I'm prepared for anything that may follow!

*The CLERGYMAN appears not to be in the least affected by Raymond's outburst. He sits back, looking completely relaxed as he replies in a knowing and conceited manner:*

**CLERGYMAN:** That, if I may say so, is a very unwise attitude.

*As the Clergyman carries on speaking, RAYMOND appears to be really agitated. ... He sits. ... As he stares at the Clergyman in a stark way, he fumbles for his drink on the table. In doing so, his hand touches the television remote control unit. He gives a little gasp, for he has immediately thought of something. He takes the unit in his hand.*

**CLERGYMAN:** ... Mind you, it isn't an unusual initial reaction from some of my clients. But once I have explained the terrible consequences due to such an attitude, we soon come to an amicable agreement. ... Now let us take your case. You have a loving wife, a good job and are a respected member of socie—.

*The CLERGYMAN has noticed the control unit in Raymond's hand pointing at the TV set. He is slightly annoyed as he interrupts his own dissertation, exclaiming:*  
**CLERGYMAN:** ... I say! Please don't mess with that thing whilst I am speaking to you! ... Now, where —.

*He suddenly stops speaking, closes his eyes and whilst retaining his pose, appears to be asleep – RAYMOND has pressed 'that' button on the control unit.*

*RAYMOND lets out a sigh of relief and replaces the control unit on the table. ... After a few moments of serious contemplation it appears that he has come to a decision. He then walks across to the sleeping CLERGYMAN and loudly claps his hands in front of the man's face – this has no effect. He then shakes him, but this doesn't effect the sleeping posture in any way. ... RAYMOND then reaches and fumbles around the inside breast pockets of the man's jacket. He takes out a wallet. Then from other jacket pockets he takes out a diary, a small notebook and a comb. ... He puts back the comb, walks to the settee, sits, and then commences to examine the contents of the wallet. This done, he puts it on the adjacent table and then quickly looks through the diary and notebook. ... What he sees, interests him greatly – so much so, that he takes them both across to the writing desk, still reading the notebook as he does so. Once there, he puts them both down and sits. He takes an exercise book and a pen out of a writing desk drawer and proceeds to copy entries out of the notebook then the diary. As he does this he gives occasional anxious glances in the direction of the sleeping Clergyman. ... It takes about twenty seconds to complete the copying. After a final read through of his notes, he puts the exercise book and pen back in the drawer. He then gathers up the diary and the small notebook, and after collecting the wallet from the table, puts them all back in their owner's pockets. ... This done, he goes and once again sits on the settee, spending the next fifteen seconds just sitting there, staring at the Clergyman with a look of intense hatred. He then stares at the floor in a thoughtful mood. ... After about ten seconds he gives a sudden furtive glance at the Clergyman. The following look of satisfaction on RAYMOND'S face indicates that he has decided on a course of action. ... He then leaves the room.*

*After about twenty seconds RAYMOND returns, he carrying a portable cassette tape recorder with an electric lead, a microphone with a lead, and a cassette tape. He takes them across to the window area and places them on the floor. ... After a quick glance at the sleeping Clergyman he opens the curtains, slides the recorder close to the window, plugs the machine into an adjacent electric wall socket, then inserts the cassette tape. The microphone lead is plugged into the recorder. He*

*then presses buttons on the machine and closes the curtains – placing the microphone behind them at a small gap where they meet. ... He goes across to the Clergyman, looking closely at him in order to make sure he is still asleep – then from his standing position there looks back in the direction of the window, obviously making sure that nothing untoward can be seen. ... RAYMOND then goes and sits on the settee, and after again looking in the direction of the window, picks up the television remote control unit, points it at the TV set, takes a deep breath and is clearly seen to press 'that' button.*

*It is as he is putting the control unit back on the table, prior to picking up his drink, that the CLERGYMAN suddenly awakens and immediately continues his rhetoric as though he had not been interrupted:*

**CLERGYMAN:** ... was I? ... Oh yes! In addition, you are an active church member and a personal friend of the minister himself. You have a lot to lose. Also, would your wife ever forgive you? And just imagine having to face all those people once word gets around about your escapade – you will be ruined! ... I would make damn sure that everybody knows. You would be very surprised how quickly word spreads – scandal is a very juicy topic.

*Whilst the Clergyman is speaking, RAYMOND sits staring wide-eyed at the floor in front of himself. He has the appearance of being horror-stricken. The CLERGYMAN pauses for Raymond to say something.*

*Then:*

**RAYMOND:** B-But you will ruin me financially if I pay!

**CLERGYMAN:** Oh, no! On the contrary, you will find me a very reasonable man. I guarantee that my requirements will be well within your limits. You won't even have to take out a bank loan.

**RAYMOND:** But I would have to! I don't have much capital.

**CLERGYMAN:** I can assure you that it won't be necessary. You see, my usual method of receiving payments is by monthly instalments – on the fourth Friday of every month in your case.

**RAYMOND:** Every month?

**CLERGYMAN:** Yes, you can treat it as an additional mortgage – and the payments don't increase. I don't even ask more for cost of living rises. ... Unfortunately, you can't claim tax relief.

**RAYMOND:** How-how much? ... How long for?

**CLERGYMAN:** My dear man, all I'm asking for is nine hundred pounds a month.

**RAYMOND:** I-I can't afford that – never!

**CLERGYMAN:** What then is your offer?

**RAYMOND:** Em, em, – two hundred – em, two hundred pounds a month!

**CLERGYMAN:** Oh, no! I couldn't accept that. Let us split the difference and make it say five hundred and fifty a month.

**RAYMOND:** No! The most I can afford is two hundred and fifty!

*After thinking it over:*

**CLERGYMAN:** No! I'm sorry, the best I can consider will be four hundred and fifty – after all, I've come down from nine hundred. ... That's final!

*After a few tense seconds of serious thought, then said in a resigned manner:*

**RAYMOND:** Very well then – but for how long?

**CLERGYMAN:** I have to take into account the relatively small amount that you are prepared to pay – six years, and that also is final!

**RAYMOND:** Six years? ... But how can I be sure that you won't extend it, or even ask for more?

**CLERGYMAN:** I've been in this business for many years, and can assure you that I always keep my word. In addition, I'm not such a fool as to break it. For if I did, the client may get desperate and risk everything in starting some foolish retaliatory action – not that I can't deal with it! But I could find it a little irksome. By the way, the terms are strictly cash – no cheques.

**RAYMOND:** But how do I pay?

**CLERGYMAN:** I have a collecting agent. ... The first actual payment will be made in the bus queue on the way to your office, on the fourth Friday morning of the month. My man will make sure that he is stood directly behind you. He will tap the back of your heel with his toe. You will then discreetly exchange envelopes with him. Yours will contain the payment. The one handed to you will contain instructions regarding the venue for the following month's payment.

**RAYMOND:** How can I be sure that somebody else won't start blackmailing me? For example, that acquaintance of yours who put you in touch with Monica.

**CLERGYMAN:** That's very astute of you, if I may say so. ... The man concerned does not actually know your name, and I warned the young lady involved not to tell anyone else about you. But if anybody threatens you, let me know right away – I don't allow anyone to poach on *my* territory!

*The CLERGYMAN drains his glass, stands, then proceeds to go to the drinks cabinet and help himself to another drink – this done, he takes it back to his seat and again sits.*

*RAYMOND is in serious thought as he watches him poach the drink.*

*Then:*

**RAYMOND:** Let me get this straight. ... You are pretending to be the Reverend Frobisher, and have found out certain things about my relationship with a particular young lady. If I don't pay you four hundred and fifty pounds a month for the next six years, you will make public the details of my affair with her. You do this in the full knowledge that any revelations would most likely ruin my marriage and certainly finish my career at the Ecclesiastical Lending Society – to say nothing of the social disgrace. ... In fact, you are blackmailing me!

*The CLERGYMAN initially looks puzzled. He deliberates. ... Then after taking a drink from his glass, replies:*

**CLERGYMAN:** What you say is basically correct, though I don't necessarily agree with some of the phraseology. ... Well! Do you agree to my terms?

*A pause, then:*

**RAYMOND:** What would you say if I told you that I know your name is Desmond Richardson and you live at Ashville Court?

*The CLERGYMAN looks shocked – he immediately jumps to his feet and exclaims in a loud and angry voice:*

**CLERGYMAN:** How the hell did you find out?

*After a short pause for reflection, he continues in an arrogant way:*

**CLERGYMAN:** ... I don't give a damn! Do what you want about it! You can't prove a thing! Your knowledge makes no difference to my attitude – pay up, or be ruined! ... But I must warn you, that if you in any way try to make use of your knowledge, I will immediately make public all the sordid details of your affair with that poor and desperate young woman. It won't just be hearsay – oh, no! You see, I bought those intimate letters you foolishly sent her. Therefore, use your knowledge about me, at your peril! Make one move against me and I will not hesitate to retaliate! ... As I have said, you can't prove a thing about me, but I have ready evidence of your disgraceful behaviour towards that young woman. ... In addition, I have some rather nasty physical ways of dealing with people who threaten me. So pay up – or else!

*Looking agitated:*

**RAYMOND:** I'm-I'm sorry! Pl-Please forget I ever mentioned it. I didn't mean to threaten you.

*As the CLERGYMAN sits, he smiles then says:*

**CLERGYMAN:** That's better. We don't want any unpleasantness, do we? ... I really cannot allow myself to be intimidated by a client. It is simply not on – it's-it's, unprofessional! ... Now, I'm prepared to forgive and forget, and again ask you to agree to my terms, but there is however —.

*Interrupting:*

**RAYMOND:** Yes! Yes! I do. I won't mention you to anyone – I promise!

**CLERGYMAN:** Very well then. But as I was about to say before you interrupted me, there is however one condition.

*In a fearful way:*

**RAYMOND:** Wh-what is that?

**CLERGYMAN:** You must tell me how you know my name and where I live.

**RAYMOND:** Oh! I-I, em, —.

*Interrupting:*

**CLERGYMAN:** It is essential that I know, for if you don't tell me I —.

*He suddenly stops speaking, for the sound of the front door bell is faintly heard from the direction of the hall. He stands up and looks in the direction of the room's entry door from the hall. ... RAYMOND also stands and looks in the same direction.*

*Then as RAYMOND makes a move towards the door:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Leave it! They may go away.

*BOTH stand there in silence, looking towards the door – occasionally glancing at each other. ... The door bell rings again. ... It rings again a few seconds later, but this time is accompanied by the sound of the front door's hand knocker being used to good affect. ... RAYMOND looks agitated – the CLERGYMAN appears uneasy.*

*Then in an annoyed manner:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Go and answer it! Send whoever it is away.

*RAYMOND nods then exits the room, closing the door behind himself.*

*There is a short pause then the voices of RAYMOND and a WOMAN are faintly heard, the WOMAN'S quickly getting louder. ... Suddenly the room's entry door is flung open and in walks PAMELA. ... She stops dead in her tracks as she sees the Clergyman – she is clearly shocked and amazed to see him there. The CLERGYMAN is equally amazed to see her.*

**PAMELA:** You! ... What are you doing h—.

*She suddenly stops as a tense-looking RAYMOND enters the room.*

*There follows a pregnant silence, which is soon broken by RAYMOND saying in an uneasy voice:*

**RAYMOND:** Em, th-this is the R-Reverend Frobisher.

*Quickly composing himself, he smiles as he says:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Arh, you must be the good lady of the house – Mrs. ... em, Brow—.

*Trying to appear natural, she interrupts:*

**PAMELA:** ... It-It's, em, Pamela!

**CLERGYMAN:** How do you do!

*RAYMOND still looks tense as PAMELA, trying not to appear uneasy, says to Raymond:*

**PAMELA:** As-As I was saying, dear. Th-The meeting had been called off. Amanda thought Geraldine had told me, but of course she hadn't. And as usual, I forgot to take our front door ke—.

*She suddenly stops – stares at Raymond in an alarmed way, then exclaims:*

**PAMELA:** ... W-What's the matter, darling?

*This outburst is caused by the fact that RAYMOND is doubled-up and clutching his stomach! Though obviously in pain, he nevertheless manages to utter:*

**RAYMOND:** I f-feel sick!

*Looking panicky and holding his mouth, RAYMOND suddenly dashes out of the room – immediately followed by a worried-looking PAMELA.*

*After watching them depart, the CLERGYMAN drains the drink from his glass. He then slowly walks across to the drinks cabinet and pours himself another drink. He returns to his seat, sits, then leans forward with the glass between his hands. He looks very concerned as he stares at the floor in front of himself. ... After a few seconds he gives a little nod – he has obviously decided on a course of action.*

*A little later, PAMELA returns alone. ... She, after closing the entry door behind herself, walks to the settee, but does not sit. The CLERGYMAN immediately stands.*

*Looking tense:*

**PAMELA:** He's been sick – but he seems better now. I've told him to lie down for a few minutes. Th-This always happens when he gets upset – I think his job is to bla—.

*Suddenly looking very alarmed, she breaks-off, tensely demanding:*

**PAMELA:** What are you doing here?

*Looking slightly uncomfortable, but nevertheless speaking in a way in keeping with his supposed reverent status:*

**CLERGYMAN:** I can assure you that I came here without knowing this is your home. I would nev—.

*Interrupting, she demands:*

**PAMELA:** Wh-Why are you dressed as a parson?

**CLERGYMAN:** I am a minister of the church, and have been one for many years.

*Looking bewildered:*

**PAMELA:** Do you mean to say that you were one when we met on that coach tour three years ago?

**CLERGYMAN:** Yes, yes I was.

*Now close to tears:*



**PAMELA:** How could you? You-You told me you were a college lecturer. ... Those nights we spent together – you-you seduced me!

**CLERGYMAN:** I did no such thing – you were more than willing from the start. ... It was indeed fortunate that you and mother had booked separate rooms. ... I didn't tell anybody I was a minister, because I wanted a holiday completely divorced from that way of life.

**PAMELA:** You *did* seduce me! I had never even thought of deceiving Raymond before.

**CLERGYMAN:** You enjoyed it every bit as much as I did. ... I thought that since we agreed not to see each other again, you would have counted it as a brief and enjoyable encounter.

*Clearly tense:*

**PAMELA:** Enjoyable brief encounter? It's been on my mind ever since!

*Then in a determined way:*

**PAMELA:** ... You still haven't told me why you are here!

**CLERGYMAN:** If I had known you lived here I would not have come. ... You must find it quite embarrassing, my dear. ... Em, what a charming room this is. It reminds me of —.

*Interrupting, she demands:*

**PAMELA:** What are you doing in my house? ... I never wanted to see you again!

*He pauses then says:*

**CLERGYMAN:** I am a member of the Church's Overseas Relief Committee. And as such, occasionally call on members of the parish in order to try to organize local sponsored events in aid of our work. I find it best to arrive without prior arrangements. ... I swear I didn't know that Raymond is your husband. After all, Brown is quite a common name.

*Obviously upset, she wipes tears from her eyes with the back of her hand:*

**PAMELA:** I-I feel so ashamed at being in the same room as you – esp-especially when Raymond is present.

*Suddenly alarmed, she exclaims:*

**PAMELA:** What would happen if he ever found out?

**CLERGYMAN:** But he won't find out! Well, at least not from me.

**PAMELA:** But how can I be sure? If he —.

*Interrupting:*

**CLERGYMAN:** It is not in my interests to let him find out. ... Promise me that you will never tell him – you have a lot more to lose than me. But if you do so, I will make damn sure that —.

*Interrupting, demanding loudly and angrily:*

**PAMELA:** Are you threatening me?

*Looking about himself in an apprehensive way:*

**CLERGYMAN:** No! No! ... Please keep your voice down, unless you want him to hear you!

*PAMELA suddenly buries her face in her hands as she starts to sob. ... The CLERGYMAN goes across and puts his arm around her shoulder in order to comfort her.*

*Immediately shrugging it off, she exclaims:*

**PAMELA:** Keep your hands off me!

*HE takes his arm away as he gives a nervous glance in the direction of the room's entry door.*

*Then:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Now there is no need to be alarmed – I was only comforting you. ... Please don't take it so seriously. After all, it was merely a casual affair—.

*HE stops and immediately takes a couple of backward steps – he has seen the room's entrance door is opening. ... RAYMOND, looking tense and pale, enters the room.*

*As PAMELA still appears tense, the CLERGYMAN looks at Raymond and says in a concerned way:*

**CLERGYMAN:** I hope you are feeling much better now.

**RAYMOND:** Y-yes. Yes, thank you. ... But I couldn't settle lying down.

**CLERGYMAN:** Arh, I-I was just telling your good lady about me being a member of the Church's Overseas Relief Committee – and that you may help to organize a sponsored event on our behalf.

*After looking initially somewhat puzzled (PAMELA doesn't notice), RAYMOND adds to the deceit:*

**RAYMOND:** Oh, Oh yes. I'll let you know what I can arrange.

*There is a few seconds of embarrassed silence. ... Then the CLERGYMAN takes his pocket watch out of his waistcoat pocket, looks at it, he saying:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Oh! Is that the time? ... I must be on my way. I have a meeting to chair at eight o'clock.

*PAMELA turns her head away from Raymond in order to hide a look of relief.*

**RAYMOND:** Em, mus-must you really go?

**CLERGYMAN:** Yes I must – tempus fugit!

*As RAYMOND accompanies him to the door, the CLERGYMAN stops, and turning to Pamela, says in a kindly voice:*

**CLERGYMAN:** Good night, my dear – it has been very nice meeting you.

*PAMELA, putting on a brave face, just manages the semblance of a smile and nods a mute farewell. ... As soon as they have left the room, she immediately sits on the main settee and again buries her face in her hands – it is very obvious that she is sobbing.*

*About twenty seconds later, RAYMOND re-enters the room. ... On seeing Pamela's condition he dashes across to her.*

*As he bends down to comfort her:*

**RAYMOND:** What's wrong, dear?

*Not attempting to hide her tears:*

**PAMELA:** Lend me your handkerchief.

*As he hands it to her:*

**RAYMOND:** Tell me, dear – what's upsetting you?

*She blows her nose into the handkerchief. Then when she has composed herself, says:*

**PAMELA:** I-I'm sorry, darling, but I've got a splitting headache. I couldn't hide it any longer. I think I'll go and lie down.

*PAMELA stands – then they both make their way to the door. ... After they have walked a few steps she stops them, saying:*

**PAMELA:** I'll be all right – please! There's no need to come up stairs with me.

**RAYMOND:** Very well then. Nevertheless, I'll bring you up a glass of warm milk and two aspirins.

*Then as they are about to carry on to the door:*

**PAMELA:** Will that Clergyman be back? ... I didn't like him one little bit.

**RAYMOND:** I certainly hope not. I found him to be a bit of a bore.

*PAMELA exits. ... RAYMOND closes the door after her then goes and sits on the settee. He sits there just staring at the floor in front of himself for about ten seconds. ... Then decides to go and warm the milk. But as he stands and makes his way to the door, he remembers the cassette recorder. After a quick glance in its direction, he stops and goes across and switches it off. Unplugging it, he then picks it up together with its leads and the microphone. ... He, after re-closing the curtain, then slowly walks to door. But before he exits he turns off the room's lights at the local wall switch.*

*As he closes the door behind himself, the Stage Curtains **CLOSE**.*

*MONTHLY PAYMENTS*

*Thomas Baines*

**END OF ACT TWO**



## ACT THREE

*The Stage Curtains **SLOWLY OPEN.***

*The window curtains are closed, with the room in darkness – it is night-time. ...  
The initial sounds indicate that PEOPLE are entering the house via its front door.  
The sudden appearance of chinks of light around the room's entry door indicates  
that the hall light has been turned on.*

*There is a hubbub of chatter heard (PAMELA, ESME, GERALD and RAYMOND)  
that gets louder as they approach the lounge's entry door. ... The door opens and  
PAMELA is briefly silhouetted as she enters. The lounge's main lights come on –  
PAMELA has turned them on and is seen at the wall-mounted switch. ... As she  
walks to the centre of the room, GERALD and ESME together with RAYMOND  
enter and follow her. It is evident by the way they are dressed that they have been  
out for the evening – the women are wearing evening dresses and the men are  
dressed in dinner suits. ... The door has been closed.*

*Once they have entered, and then said to Esme:*

**PAMELA:** Let me make you a drink.

**ESME:** No thanks, Pamela. Remember, it isn't all that long ago since we had coffee at the restaurant.

*As everybody sits, (with PAMELA and RAYMOND on the main settee):*

**GERALD:** I really did enjoy the dance, and the meal was excellent.

**RAYMOND:** Yes – they really excelled themselves at Antonio's tonight.

*Sadly:*

**GERALD:** It was a great pity that we all had to have soft drinks.

*ESME gives him an icy stare.*

**RAYMOND:** I didn't really miss the wine.

**GERALD:** Em, it was really good of both you to do without for my sake.

*ESME nods in agreement.*

**PAMELA:** Esme also did without!.

**GERALD:** Oh, yes! Thanks, darling.

**ESME (to Pamela):** Did you see that Terry Morgan was in Antonio's with his ex-wife?  
... I spotted them as we came out.

**PAMELA:** No, I didn't, but it's very interesting – especially after all the sordid details of his affair came out. ... I thought they hated each other.

**GERALD:** I understand he's been very lonely since the divorce.

**PAMELA:** But she's been knocking about with that second-hand car dealer in the High Street.

**ESME:** But that's been over for some time now.

**RAYMOND:** Well, let's hope that they both forgive and forget.

**PAMELA:** I could never forgive a husband who has been unfaithful.

*RAYMOND looks distinctly uncomfortable at this. None of the others notice.*

*Then quickly changing the subject:*

**RAYMOND:** By the way, I've got a book of the new issue postage stamps. They're very good – has anyone else seen any yet?

*ESME and GERALD shake their heads and murmur "No".*

**RAYMOND:** Hang on – I'll get it.

*As RAYMOND rises and makes his way to the writing desk:*

**ESME:** We used to collect First Day Covers.

*RAYMOND has opened the top drawer of the writing desk. ... He then looks a little annoyed as he shouts across to Pamela:*

**RAYMOND:** Have you been messing about in this drawer? ... Everything seems to be out of place!

*Looking annoyed:*

**PAMELA:** No, I haven't! You know I never touch anything in there.

*RAYMOND quickly opens and closes the other drawers. He looks very annoyed and more than a little puzzled.*

**ESME (to Pamela):** Did I ever tell you that the Linthorpe's are going to buy an additional shop in Castle Road?

**PAMELA:** No! Business must certainly be picking up.

**GERALD:** It doesn't seem all that many years ago when he was going from door to door selling greengrocery from an old van.

*Whilst this conversation is taking place, RAYMOND has returned empty-handed from the desk. He then just sits there wearing an annoyed expression.*

*PAMELA notices:*

**PAMELA:** What's wrong with you? ... Where are the stamps?

*In a cross way:*

**RAYMOND:** I-I couldn't find the damned things!

**PAMELA:** Really, Raymond! I don't know what's come over you during the last few days – the least thing seems to upset you. ...

*As she speaks, RAYMOND reaches for the television remote control unit (on the adjacent table) and sits up with it in his hand.*

**PAMELA:** ... For most of the time you just sit there sulking and —. Put that damn thing down when I'—.

*RAYMOND, after pointing the unit at the TV set, has pressed 'that' button. This of course has the effect of making the OTHER THREE CHARACTERS immediately quiet and asleep, whilst retaining their postures.*

*RAYMOND at once puts down the control unit – he is looking a little tense. He takes only a few seconds to recover, this being signified by him glancing in the direction of the bar and giving a meaningful nod. ... After a quick glance in Pamela's direction, he stands and goes to the drinks cabinet to pour himself a drink. This done, he goes back to his seat. He then just stares ahead as he sips from the glass. ... His thoughts are suddenly interrupted by the sound of the telephone bell heard clearly ringing. He looks rather annoyed as he puts the drink on the table and walks across to the telephone.*

*Note: During the following telephone conversation, he occasionally gives nervous glances in the general direction of the other three.*

*On picking up the receiver:*

**RAYMOND:** Hello! Central 276932

*p*

*He scowls, then:*

**RAYMOND:** Oh, it's you! ... Why are you —.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** We-We've been out, and only arrived home about ten minutes ago.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Yes-Yes I am.

*p*

*In a hostile way:*

**RAYMOND:** What the hell are you phoning me for? The first payment isn't due until a week on Friday!

*p*

*Then quieter:*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, yes, I remember – just before my wife came in.

*This time he pauses is for a slightly longer period, obviously stalling – his brain searching for an answer – then:*

**RAYMOND:** Why the hell should I tell you that? It wasn't a condition of our agreement.



*p*

**RAYMOND:** I don't remember you saying that!

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Well, em – I know your name and address because I have a good memory for such matters. ... You were pointed out to me by an acquaintance of mine. He-He said: "That's Desmond Richardson – never have anything to do with him, he's a very dangerous man!" ... It-It was a few weeks later when I was checking a computer printout at the office for the credit ratings of a man called Donald Richards, that I came across your name and address – immediately I sensed it was the same Desmond Richardson.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** No, I didn't recognize you until you told me the real reason for your visit here.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** No! No! I won't tell you the name of my informant. You're not going to blackmail him as well!

*p*

**RAYMOND:** No! I've told you how I know – I'll tell you no more!

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Of course I'm telling the truth. How else would I know?

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, I certainly can guess the consequences if you discover that I've been lying.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Obviously, it wouldn't be in my interests to lie.

*p*

**RAYMOND:** Yes, I'll be in the bus queue on the Friday morning – goodbye!

*RAYMOND has a relieved look as he slams down the receiver then makes his way back towards his seat. ... Taking his drink from the table, he once again sits. The worried look soon returns as he sits there obviously thinking about his troubles – he occasionally glancing at the others. ... He glances at the phone then the writing desk – appearing to be puzzled, he again glances a couple of times at the writing desk. Immediately after the second glance he gives an alarmed look, and then looks hard in the direction of the main window curtain's pelmet.*

*Appearing agitated, he puts his drink back on the table and quickly walks across to the writing desk chair. Picking this up, he carries it across to the window. He then uses the chair to stand on as he reaches up and feels on top of the curtain's pelmet. He has a look of great relief as he withdraws his hand holding his notebook and then a cassette recorder tape in its case. He puts them back, climbs down and then replaces the chair at the desk.*

*Once back in his seat, he sits for a few seconds in serious thought. He glances at Gerald, and then again. The following look on his face indicates that an idea is forming in his mind. After further thought he gives another glance at Gerald – his look indicating that he has made up his mind about something.*

*He stands, goes to PAMELA and shakes her – she still stays asleep. He does the same to ESME then GERALD, with the same result. ... He then shakes GERALD*

*in a very violent manner – also slapping him across the face a few times. This has the effect of making GERALD stir as awakening from a deep sleep. After a few more shakes and face slaps, GERALD awakens up. ... When GERALD is more or less conscious he looks about himself, and when his eyes finally focus he, amazed, sees Esme then Pamela, in their unconscious states.*

*Shocked – he demands:*

**GERALD:** W-What the bloody hell's going on?

*Raymond leans forward and touches him in a comforting manner, saying:*

**RAYMOND:** Now steady-on! I can explain.

*Giving Raymond a wild look:*

**GERALD:** You certainly better had!

*GERALD stands then goes across and touches and examines Esme in a concerned way. ... He then glares at Raymond, demanding:*

**GERALD:** Well?

**RAYMOND:** They're both just asleep. ... Do you remember me showing you the brown button on the television remote control unit, the other night?

*Looking puzzled:*

**GERALD:** What the hell has that got to do with it?

**RAYMOND:** It has everything to do with it.

*GERALD glares at him in a disbelieving way.*

**RAYMOND:** Well, when I press that button, everyone else in the room goes to sleep.

**GERALD:** That's absolute rubbish – you must be pissed!

**RAYMOND:** I can assure you I'm not! I can easily prove what I've said.

**GERALD:** Go on then – prove it!

**RAYMOND:** Very well. ... First of all, you go back and sit in your chair.

*A cynical-looking GERALD reluctantly obeys. ... When Gerald has sat down, RAYMOND goes and sits.*

*Picking up the remote control unit:*

**RAYMOND:** When I point this at the TV set and press the button, they will awake and everything will seem to them exactly as it was before they went to sleep. Any conversation will carry on as though not interrupted.

*Shaking his head in disbelief:*

**GERALD:** Surely, you're not serious?

**RAYMOND:** I most certainly am! ... It's most essential that when they come round you should act as though nothing has happened – I have very good reasons for not letting them know.

*Appearing bewildered, and then shrugging his shoulders:*

**GERALD:** All right, carry on.

**RAYMOND:** I urgently require to speak to you alone on a very serious matter. So when things have been back to normal for a few minutes, I'll leave the room. When I've gone, you find some reason for holding the remote control unit – then after pointing it at the TV set, press the brown button. When they are asleep come and give me a shout – I had better be upstairs – I don't know what its effective range is. ... Are you ready?

*GERALD takes a deep breath and braces himself.*

*RAYMOND is about to press 'that' button, but suddenly bethinks himself – resulting in him quickly taking the drink off the table and putting it under the settee. ... He then, pointing the unit at the TV set, presses the button – PAMELA and ESME at once waken up.*

**PAMELA:** ... I'm speaking to you.

*GERALD is sat with an incredulous look on his face as Raymond replaces the unit on the table.*

**PAMELA:** I'm sure you need a medical examination.

**RAYMOND:** I'll be all right – it's possibly due to all the hassle at the office. You worry too much!

*In an annoyed way:*

**PAMELA:** Do I?

*Suddenly glaring at Gerald and exclaiming:*

**ESME:** Why have you got that stupid look on your face?

*He winces and looks embarrassed:*

**GERALD:** I-I didn't realize I looked stupid. I was merely listening attentively.

*Looking at Pamela, then at Raymond, he adds:*

**GERALD:** I shouldn't worry about 'old Raymond, he'll be all right. I know only too well how pressure at work can make one feel off-colour – but it's usually temporary. ... That's right 'old man, isn't it?

*RAYMOND nods his agreement at the same time muttering "Yes". ... A lot of the tension in the room has apparently now disappeared.*

*A short pause, then:*

**ESME:** Do you know. I have that nice relaxed feeling like when I have woken up from a good night's sleep.

**PAMELA:** I feel a little that way myself. Perhaps it's the sign of having had a very enjoyable evening in convivial company.

*The others smile and nod.*

*RAYMOND gives Gerald a meaningful glance, then says:*

**RAYMOND:** If you will excuse me, everyone, I must go upstairs.

*As RAYMOND makes his exit:*

**PAMELA:** Esme, have you seen those gorgeous dresses in Hilda Gilmore's shop?

*GERALD stands and stretches himself, and as the ladies talk, he, apparently for want of something else to do, walks across and casually picks up the television remote control unit from the table.*

**ESME:** That shop has certainly improved since she took over.

**PAMELA:** Her prices are a little high, but they are such good quality clothes.

**ESME:** I must have a look when I'm in town tomorrow.

*GERALD now appears to be examining the control unit with some interest.*

**ESME:** Gerald! Please don't stand there messing with that thing.

**PAMELA:** Em, well, I've got my eye on one dress there. Perhaps if —.

*GERALD, pointing the unit at the TV set, has, without them knowing, pressed 'that' button! ... The TWO WOMEN immediately fall asleep as they sit there. ... He gasps, puts down the control unit then goes and gives each of them a gentle shake – they still remain asleep. ... Then with a smug smile on his face he strolls out of the room into the hall.*

*His voice is heard (Off-Stage) shouting:*

**GERALD (voice):** Raymond! Raymond! You can come down now!

*GERALD re-enters the room then stands waiting as he looks towards the door. ... A few seconds later RAYMOND enters the room carrying the portable cassette tape recorder and an electric extension lead. He ignores GERALD'S puzzled look as he places the things on the table next to his usual end of the settee. He then has a very close look at Pamela and Esme.*

*(Note: During their following conversations, each of them occasionally casts anxious glances at the women).*

**GERALD:** What have you brought those things in for?

*As he connects one end of the electric extension lead to the tape recorder:*

**RAYMOND:** Sit down. I need this to explain all that has happened.

*GERALD reluctantly goes to his seat, but before he sits, exclaims:*

**GERALD:** But-But —.

*RAYMOND interrupts – he is walking towards the electric wall plug socket near to the window, holding the free end of the extension lead in one hand:*

**RAYMOND:** Please, Gerald – let me tell you what happened, in my own way.

*GERALD looks perplexed. ... RAYMOND bends down and plugs in the extension lead.*

*Then as he goes to the writing desk chair:*

**RAYMOND:** We're very close friends – as a matter of fact, the best friend each other has.

*GERALD nods and looks puzzled as he watches RAYMOND take the chair from the writing desk, across to the window. ... RAYMOND stands on the chair and withdraws the cassette tape (in its case) and the notebook from the top of the curtain's pelmet. ... He returns and puts them both on the table next to the recorder. Then takes the tape out of its case and inserts it into the machine.*

*He is just about to sit down, when he suddenly bethinks himself, pauses, then says:*

**RAYMOND:** How about a drink?

**GERALD:** No thanks – you know I'm not allowed to.

**RAYMOND:** I think you'll need one by the time I've finished.

*Giving a meaningful look in Esme's direction, he continues:*

**RAYMOND:** Who else is to know? ... I'm having one. I'll pour you a 'single – you just keep it at the side of your chair until you need it.

**GERALD:** Em – yes, but I mean to try and do without it.

**RAYMOND:** Good!

*He reaches below the settee for his glass then walks to the drinks cabinet. As he does so, he says:*

**RAYMOND:** In all the years we've been friends, have you ever known me to step out of line?

**GERALD:** Out of line?

*As he is pouring the drinks:*

**RAYMOND:** You know what I mean – another woman!

**GERALD:** Apart from Pamela when you were previously married, well no! Good God, no! ... I know Pamela can be a bit trying at times – but that, never! ... You may have talked about fancying one now and again, but don't we all? It's just fantasy – I could never imagine you being unfaithful to her.

*RAYMOND, carrying two drinks, now walks across the room and puts one on the table next to Gerald's chair. He then walks to the settee, and with his own drink in his hand, sits next to the sleeping Pamela.*

*Looking very tense as he glances at Pamela:*

**RAYMOND:** But you're wrong! ... I have been unfaithful with one woman since I married Pamela, and I'll regret it for the rest of my life.

*GERALD looks shocked as RAYMOND sits there staring at him. He is uneasy – at first he doesn't know what to say. He fidgets and glances at the sleeping women..*

*Then he says:*

**GERALD:** Is-Is this going to take some time?

**RAYMOND:** Yes, it is.

**GERALD:** Don't you think we should make them more comfortable by sitting them in more relaxed positions?

**RAYMOND:** Of course.

*RAYMOND puts his drink on the table. THEY BOTH go and gently make their respective wives more comfortable. Then they return to their respective seats – RAYMOND retrieving his drink in doing so.*

*Then:*

**RAYMOND:** Well, em, it was about a year ago when it all began. ... A new girl started at the office. She worked at a keyboard, feeding information into a computer – didn't work directly for me, but quite often had to liaise with my office. She was twenty three, beautiful and not married - and what a figure! She also had a nice personality – not exactly shy with men, but in no way could she be taken to be a flirt. Her name is Monica. ... Pamela has actually met her at an office party.

**GERALD:** Oh yes – you mentioned her once or twice.

**RAYMOND:** It was very noticeable that she always seemed coy and blushed whenever she was in my company. Bradwell and Dobson noticed, and of course they used to rib me about it. As a matter of fact, ... em, perhaps it would be better if I got straight to the point. ... You know how these things develop – well, I was smitten by her and eventually asked her to go out with me. She agreed.

**GERALD:** You bloody fool! You, of all people!

**RAYMOND:** I know – I risked losing everything. I was infatuated. ... We became lovers from that first night. I used to see her about twice a month – we always went to her place

**GERALD:** You idiot!

**RAYMOND:** I know! But then she told me she was expecting a baby – mine!

