



**MOCK TUDOR LAND**

**by Stan Thompson**

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## CAST

Ursula Villiers	A respectable married woman in her early sixties
Dr Arthur Villiers	A hospital consultant in his mid-sixties
Charlotte (Charlie) Villiers	A young lady in her late teens
Geoffrey (Geoff) Villiers	A university student in his early twenties
Raymond (Ray) Villiers	A film editor in his late twenties
Irene Timpson	A respectable married woman in her early fifties
Eric Timpson	An accountant in his mid-fifties
Maureen (Mo) Jacobs	A university student in her early twenties
Leslie (Les) Franklin	A film set designer in his late twenties
Inspector Jack Deacon	An experienced police detective in his late fifties
Professor Karl Geiger	An eminent physician and theologian in his mid-sixties
Edward Simes	An impish young man in his early twenties
Ethel Perkins	A housekeeper in her mid-forties

*The characters and situations depicted in this play are fictitious. Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual situations is purely coincidental.*

## INTRODUCTION

*Welcome to my play!*

*You will soon discover that this is a play of two, very different halves: act one shamefully lulls the audience into the settled middle-class cosiness of late 1950s, English suburban life, with its ordered observance of respectability, integrity and conformity, and with just the odd clue of things that might happen. One may wonder: where is this going?*

*Act two deliberately shatters that safe illusion and changes tack to plunge the audience into a world of gothic horror, full of shocks to jolt them from act one's deceptive comfort zone.*

*The setting for this play is the newly-occupied home of the Villiers family, in a north-west suburb of 'Greater London' (as it is classified today), served by the Metropolitan Line and officially designated, 'Metro-land' (a name coined in 1915 for these new suburban developments of modern homes in beautiful countryside with a fast railway service to central London).*

*Following the First World War, many London outer suburbs (including 'Metro-land') had developments of houses in the Tudor, revival architecture style (commonly called mock Tudor in the UK), all reflecting the taste for nostalgia for rural values.*

*The play takes place during one weekend in the summer of 1959: conscription is shortly to end and, after years of austerity, there is a spirit of optimism for good things to come; the massive culture shock of the 'Swinging Sixties' is waiting on the horizon.*

*To many people, who grew up in the late 1950s (including the author of this play), it was a wholesome and innocent time, now gone forever.*

*The Villiers have just moved into their rambling mock Tudor home on Renfield Drive. On the surface, they seem a highly respectable family: patriarch, Arthur, is a consultant at the local hospital. His doting (and somewhat dotty) wife, Ursula, tends the family home with much support from 'charwoman', Ethel. Their elder son, Raymond, lives and works in the film industry, in London; the younger son, Geoffrey, is away at university; while daughter, Charlotte, is confined to home, following a violent incident abroad.*

*But a shocking family secret is about to wreak terror on this cosy world of respectability and conformity. And, just like the superficial veneer covering the façade of the Villiers' dilapidated, mock Tudor home, the veneer of respectability and integrity surrounding the Villiers family itself, is just as likely to shatter.*

*This play is recommended for adults only.*

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*The action throughout takes place in the wide, open-plan entrance hall/sitting room of a very large, but slightly shabby mock Tudor house, built in the 1920s.*

*There is a recessed entrance hall, stage right, furnished with a grandfather clock, oak hall table and umbrella stand. An oil painting hangs on the wall adjacent to the front door.*

*A staircase rises from upstage centre, leading to a first floor landing with balustrades that spans the full width of the open-plan area.*

*A large bay window, surrounded by heavy velvet drapes, is situated downstage right, ground floor. A similar window is situated immediately above, at first floor level.*

*The open-plan sitting room is furnished with a large winged-back sofa, three matching armchairs, an oak coffee table, an ancient HMV radiogram, an oak sideboard, bookcase and a standard lamp with a large shade. Ancient-looking wall lights are fitted with candle-shaped light bulbs.*

*A door, leading to a basement laboratory, is covered by a heavy tapestry curtain and is situated upstage left.*

*Recommended overture music: 'Allegretto' (10 minutes approx.) – second movement from Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 in A major, op.92*

**ACT ONE:** SCENE ONE: Thursday. 20:36

SCENE TWO: Thursday, 22:53

SCENE THREE: Friday, 14:30

SCENE FOUR: Friday, 20:26

SCENE FIVE: Friday, 23:05

**INTERVAL**

**ACT TWO:** SCENE ONE: Saturday, 02:54

SCENE TWO: Saturday, 21:17

SCENE THREE: Sunday, 06:40

SCENE FOUR: Sunday, 16:50

SCENE FIVE: Sunday, 21:48

**ACT ONE**

**SCENE ONE**

*Thursday, 20:36 – the lighting is mellow: the wall lights and standard lamp are switched on.*

*At curtain rise, URSULA VILLIERS has just given neighbour, IRENE TIMPSON, a tour round the house, when the action commences.*

URSULA *(coming down the stairs with IRENE TIMPSON)* So here we are, back where we started. You've had the grand tour.

IRENE It's very spacious, Mrs Villiers, I must say.

URSULA Well it ought to be for what it's cost us - over four thousand pounds! It's Mock Tudor, you know. Built in the twenties. My husband, Arthur, really wanted an Art Deco house like the ones in The Avenue. But this house offers greater flexibility with its very large basement, wine cellar and garden. And it is detached, of course.

IRENE *(looking around)* I suppose you'll be getting the decorators in?

URSULA        No, we like it as it is. *(a moment)* I suppose it could do with some freshening-up, but we're in no hurry - we love its lived-in atmosphere.

IRENE         Well, nobody's lived here for a while. The last occupants, the Harkers, moved out in mysterious circumstances. A moonlight flit, would you believe?

URSULA        Really? I didn't know that. I never met them, of course; my Arthur dealt with the house purchase. I haven't a clue about estate agents. I believe they can be awfully scary. *(a moment)* Would you like some tea or coffee?

IRENE         Yes, tea would be lovely. Thank you.

*URSULA picks up a small, brass hand bell from the hall table and shakes it.*

URSULA        *(pointing at the sofa to IRENE)* Do sit down.

*They both sit on the large winged-back sofa, where IRENE has left her folded umbrella.*

*A moment.*

*ETHEL, the maid, enters from stage left.*

ETHEL         *(morosely)* Yes, Mrs Villiers?

URSULA        Ethel, there you are. Can we have some tea, please?

ETHEL         *(looking annoyed and sighing)* Yes, of course. *(mumbling to herself)* Tea at this late hour, indeed.

*ETHEL exits stage left.*

IRENE         *(surprised)* You have a charwoman, Mrs Villiers?

URSULA        Yes, this is a very large house and my Arthur thought I should have some help with the housekeeping. Domestics don't come cheap, but Ethel's worth her weight in gold, although she can be rather petulant at times.

*A brief moment, then in a hushed voice, after looking stage left:*

But, between you and me, I have a feeling that perhaps Ethel's a little light-fingered - some of my jewellery seems to have gone missing - but maybe it's me being a bit absent minded....

IRENE         Well, let's hope that your jewellery turns up, Mrs Villiers. One can't put up with domestics who pilfer.

URSULA Quite so. *(a brief moment)* But look, please call me “Ursula”. “Mrs Villiers” sounds so frightfully formal.

IRENE Well, you must call me “Irene”, then. *(a moment)* I’m so pleased you’ve moved into Renfield Drive, Ursula. It’s so very quiet here. And it’s so nice to have some new respectable neighbours, for a change. I have tried calling before, but nobody seemed to be at home?

URSULA Oh, really? Well, when my Arthur gets home from work, he often shuts himself away in his laboratory and doesn’t like being disturbed. And, if I’m not listening to the radiogram, or doing the crossword, I’ve probably got a horrid migraine and confined to bed with the curtains drawn.

IRENE *(sincerely)* Oh, how dreadful for you. *(looking around)* Do you not have a television set? We got ours for the coronation.

URSULA No. Arthur doesn’t approve. He prefers the wireless.

*ETHEL enters stage left pushing a rickety, wooden tea trolley, containing a Clarice Cliff tea service and a glass cake stand bearing a home-made fruit cake.*

Ah, tea’s here. Thank you, Ethel.

*Apathetic ETHEL shuffles off stage left.*

How do you take your tea, Irene?

IRENE Just a little milk, please, Ursula. I prefer it strong.

*URSULA pours tea for IRENE and hands it to her, but pours none for herself.*

Thank you. *(showing surprise)* You’re not having any?

URSULA No, not just now. I shall wait for my Arthur to make an appearance before I have my bedtime cocoa. *(a brief moment)* Would you like some of Ethel’s fruit cake? I understand it can be quite delicious.

IRENE No thank you. I’ll be having supper shortly, when I get back. *(a moment)* So, your husband, Arthur, has a laboratory here? Is he one of those clever boffins one reads about nowadays?

URSULA Yes, the first thing he did was to set up his laboratory in the basement. Not that I’m allowed to go anywhere near it, of course. And judging by all the paraphernalia he’s had delivered, I’m beginning to think my Arthur’s trying to split the atom down there!

*They both laugh.*

But I'm not sure if you could call my Arthur a boffin - he's a doctor at the local Northcliffe Hospital – some sort of consultant – but don't ask me what kind. I can never pronounce it! *(she laughs)* And what about your Eric? What does he do for a living?

IRENE Eric's an auditor in the Borough Treasurer's Department at the town hall. He says it's all very boring.

URSULA I imagine most jobs can be boring these days - even if you're that horrid Harold Macmillan person!

*They both laugh again. There is a distant rumble of thunder.*

URSULA I think we're in for a stormy weekend according to the wireless weather forecast. *(pointing at IRENE'S umbrella)* You might need that later. Don't forget it.

IRENE Have you always lived around here, Ursula?

URSULA No. We've moved about a bit, always living close to major teaching hospitals, where Arthur's specialist skills are recognised. But Arthur doesn't like to stay in any place too long. *(a moment)* And what about you, Irene? Have you always lived locally?

IRENE I've lived here all my life. *(pointing stage right)* Across the road in my parents' house; it's where I was born.

URSULA So do you still live with your parents?

IRENE *(with emotion)* No. They are both dead. They were badly injured in a train crash seven years ago. They were on their way back from the Lake District to attend our wedding. They died in hospital. The doctors were unable to save them.

URSULA *(putting a comforting arm around IRENE)* Oh, Irene. I don't know what to say. And on your wedding day, too. *(a moment)* Was it at my Arthur's hospital, the Northcliffe, where they died?

IRENE No. It was a hospital in Manchester. But they'd both died before Eric and I could get there in time.

URSULA *(quietly)* You poor things.....

IRENE *(pensive)* They say that time's a great healer. I have good days, and then there are the bad ones, when I expect mummy and daddy to walk through

the door, just like they used to. *(a brief moment)* I've even kept their bedroom just the same, in case....

*There is a flash of lightning followed by distant thunder. Rain starts to fall.*

URSULA Have you any other family living nearby?

IRENE I've two brothers, Herbert and Bernard; they're both married and don't live locally. But to be honest, we haven't seen them since my parents died. And we hardly communicate nowadays – just the occasional Christmas card.

URSULA That must be very upsetting for you. *(trying to lighten the mood)* Now, I wonder when my Arthur's going to make an appearance? He knows you're here.

IRENE *(not really listening, then after a moment)* Have you any children, Ursula? Eric and I are yet to be blessed.

URSULA Yes, we have three - two sons and a daughter. Raymond's the eldest, 26. He's does something in films in London. And Geoffrey's 20 and at university. They'll both be arriving tomorrow with their lady friends, Lesley and Maureen. *(a moment, as she seems upset)*. And we have a lovely daughter, Charlotte, who's just turned eighteen. But she's rather poorly at the moment.

IRENE Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that. Is it anything serious?

URSULA She was attacked, poor thing, on a school trip to Eastern Europe two years ago. It's affected her rather badly. But my Arthur takes care of her special treatment. He's even set up a small surgery next to his laboratory, where he can deal with her medication. But he doesn't like to trouble me with all the details. He knows how much it upsets me. And Charlotte's just returned from a spell in a sanatorium abroad. But I'm not sure how successful that was.

IRENE *(shocked)* Attacked! Oh, how awful. And in a foreign country, too. Did their police catch him? Is he in prison?

URSULA *(matter-of-fact)* No, the police over there did their best, I suppose. But they couldn't be sure whether it was a man or an animal that attacked her.

IRENE *(spluttering her tea)* Good heavens! That's dreadful. What a horrid thing to happen to a young lady on a school trip, of all things!

*Suddenly, ARTHUR VILLIERS appears from behind the curtain, covering the door leading to the basement, stage left. He walks toward the two women.*

ARTHUR       *(genial)* Good evening.

URSULA       Arthur, this is Irene Timpson. She and her husband, Eric, live opposite at number seventy-nine.

ARTHUR       *(shaking hands with IRENE)* How delightful. I am so very pleased to meet you, Irene. Welcome to our humble home.

IRENE         Hello Dr Villiers. I was just saying to Ursula how nice it is to see this house occupied again. I hope you'll all be very happy here.

ARTHUR       Thank you, Irene. I do hope so.

IRENE         And I was so shocked to hear about your poor daughter, Charlotte. I hope she makes a full recovery.

ARTHUR       *(agitated and staring at URSULA)* The physical scars have healed, but the emotional ones aren't so easy to treat. But my wife shouldn't have worried you - our Charlotte is responding well to treatment. *(addressing URSULA)* And how are you feeling this evening, my dear?

URSULA       *(clutching her forehead)* My head's beginning to throb. I can feel another beastly migraine coming on. Can you give me something to help me sleep, Arthur?

ARTHUR       Perhaps a shot of morphine to quell the pain.

IRENE         *(trying to lighten the mood)* How convenient it must be to have your own private laboratory at home. Ursula was telling me all about it. *(laughing)* She said you spend a lot of time down there.

ARTHUR       I devote a lot of my spare time to research. And it was very fortunate that the enormous basement here enabled me to install a respectable laboratory. *(a brief moment)* Would you care to see it?

URSULA       *(worried)* Arthur, it's getting late. I don't think you should bother Irene tonight. She can see your laboratory another time.

IRENE         It's no trouble, Ursula. I would love to see it. I really would.

ARTHUR       I won't detain Irene too long. I promise. Just a short tour. *(addressing URSULA with authority)* Now you, my dear, must go upstairs before your migraine gets any worse. I shall be up shortly with your injection.

URSULA       Oh, very well, then. *(standing up and shaking hands with IRENE)* Goodnight, Irene. Don't let my husband keep you too long. *(joking)* And consider yourself very honoured that Arthur's allowing you into his inner sanctum!

IRENE           *(standing up)* Lovely to meet you, Ursula. You must all come over for Sunday lunch very soon. *(addressing URSULA as she goes upstairs)* And I won't let Dr Villiers detain me too long. I have to be back shortly for my Eric's supper, or I shall never hear the end of it.

*ARTHUR moves stage left, towards the curtain covering the door to the basement.*

ARTHUR        This way, Irene. Do be careful on the stairs. They are rather steep. We can't have you having any accidents now, can we?

*ARTHUR draws back the curtain, opens the door, switches on the basement lights and ushers IRENE to follow him down the stairs to the laboratory below.*

*The lights slowly fade to a black-out.*

## END OF SCENE ONE

## ACT ONE

### SCENE TWO

*Thursday, 22:53 – the set is bathed in blue light to suggest the late hour.*

*When the lights come up, the silence is disturbed by the constant ringing of the door bell and loud knocking on the front door, stage right, which awakens the VILLIERS.*

*The lights are switched on.*

*ARTHUR, in a foul mood and wearing a dressing gown over his pyjamas, as he descends the staircase:*

ARTHUR        Who the devil is it at this time of night?

*ARTHUR unbolts the front door and opens it slowly to find ERIC TIMPSON on the doorstep.*

*(tetchily)* Yes, who are you? Do you realise what time it is?

ERIC           *(meekly)* I'm Eric Timpson from across the road. I'm so sorry to disturb you at this late hour, but I'm looking for my wife, Irene. I believe she was here earlier?

URSULA       *(calling down from the top of the stairs)* Who is it, Arthur?

ARTHUR       *(looking up at URSULA)* It's Irene's husband, Eric. Go back to bed....

ERIC           *(interrupting)* Yes, sorry to call so late, but I'm looking for my Irene....

*URSULA rushes down the stairs with a dressing gown over her nightdress:*

URSULA        *(worried)* Well, she was here, Eric. But she left hours ago.

*ERIC enters the hallway. ARTHUR closes the door.*

ERIC            *(anxious)* Well, she hasn't come home yet. And I'm very worried.

ARTHUR        *(calmer)* I can assure you she's not here, Eric. She left a good two hours ago. I know for certain, because I wished her "good night" and bolted the door behind her.

ERIC            *(confused)* Then where could she have got to? She's not in the house. I've looked everywhere.

URSULA        *(consoling)* She's probably popped into a neighbour's house. That's where she'll be, having a cup of tea and a good old chinwag. And lost track of the time. You mark my words.

ERIC            No. That's not possible. There are no lights on in any of our neighbours' homes. I've checked. *(a brief moment)* Then where on earth can she be?

URSULA        *(innocently)* Maybe she's had an accident? Been taken off to hospital? Arthur, you telephone the Northcliffe. Find out if Irene's there.

ARTHUR        *(sceptical)* Well, if you really think so...

*ARTHUR reluctantly picks up the telephone receiver on the hall table and dials the hospital's number. It is answered after a few rings:*

Good evening, it's Dr Arthur Villiers here. Could you put me through to the duty officer, please. *(a brief moment)* Hello, who is that? *(pause)* Oh, Nigel, it's Arthur Villiers. Sorry to trouble you at this unearthly hour - I need a favour. Could you check to see if an Irene Timpson's been admitted earlier, or is in casualty right now? *(a brief moment)* Timpson, Irene Timpson. No, I've no other details. *(turning away from ERIC and URSULA and speaking softly)* Could you check with the mortuary, too? Thanks. *(holding on and addressing ERIC)* They're checking their records. *(after a few moments of collective silence while ARTHUR awaits a response)*. You've no record? You're positive? Thank you, Nigel. I am most grateful. Good night.

ERIC            *(relieved)* She's not at the hospital, then?

ARTHUR        No, I'm afraid not. They've done a thorough check. I don't know what else to suggest.

URSULA        Then we must telephone the police, Arthur.

ERIC            I was thinking the same. But I'll go back home and do it. *(preparing to leave)*  
I'm sorry again to disturb you. And thank you for your help and concern.

ARTHUR        *(opening the door for ERIC)* So sorry to make your acquaintance under such  
worrying circumstances, Eric. Do let us know if we can be of any further  
assistance.

URSULA        *(cheerfully)* Yes, come over in the morning, but I expect you'll find her tucked  
up in bed fast asleep when you get back. Good night.

ERIC            I truly hope so. Good night, Dr and Mrs Villiers.

ARTHUR        Good night, Eric.

*ARTHUR bolts the front door after ERIC leaves, stage right.*

URSULA        *(firmly)* Look at me, Arthur – tell me that Irene left this house earlier, just as  
you explained to Eric?

ARTHUR        *(angrily)* Of course she did! What on earth are you suggesting?

*The lights slowly fade to a black-out.*

## END OF SCENE TWO

## ACT ONE

### SCENE THREE

*Friday, 14:30 – the lighting is fairly bright, but not harsh.*

*When the lights come up, GEOFFREY VILLIERS and MAUREEN JACOBS arrive. ETHEL  
opens the front door (stage right) to admit them.*

GEOFFREY      Hello, I'm Geoffrey. You must be Ethel?

ETHEL          *(cheerfully)* Hello, Mr Geoffrey. Pleased to meet you at last. You are  
expected. Come on in.

*GEOFFREY and MAUREEN enter the house. GEOFFREY is carrying a small battered  
suitcase. URSULA VILLIERS is reading a copy of 'Woman's Own' magazine on the  
sofa. She gets up to greet them. ETHEL exits stage left.*

URSULA        *(surprised)* Geoffrey, you're nice and early. What a lovely surprise. *(she  
kisses him on the cheek)*

GEOFFREY Hello, mother. Yes, we caught an earlier train. (*introducing MAUREEN*) This is Maureen, my girlfriend, mother.

URSULA (*shaking MAUREEN'S hand gently and inspecting her up and down*) Hello, Maureen. I'm so pleased to meet you at last. I hope our Geoffrey's been behaving himself?

MAUREEN (*shyly*) Hello, Mrs Villiers. Oh, yes. Your Geoff's such a gentleman.

URSULA Well, I'm so pleased to hear that. Now, you two must want to freshen-up after your long journey. I've put you, Maureen, in the bedroom (*pointing upstairs*) at the far end on the left. And we've had your things, Geoffrey, put in the first bedroom on the right. Your father and I hope you'll like your new room. It's much larger than your previous bedroom at the old house.

GEOFFREY (*looking around*) Well, it's certainly an enormous house, mother. It's almost a mansion.

URSULA Well, you have your father to blame for that. It was the large basement that attracted him.

GEOFFREY (*amused*) For that private laboratory he's always dreamt of, no doubt? (*a brief moment*) Has Ray arrived yet? I thought he would be here by now?

URSULA (*frowning*) I've no idea if and when that brother of yours will be arriving. You know what he's like. He's never been one for keeping us informed.

GEOFFREY (*gingerly*) And is Charlie back from the sanatorium? I'm so looking forward to seeing her again.

URSULA Your sister, Charlotte, is resting at the moment. I'll tell her you're here and, hopefully, she'll be able to join us later for dinner. Talking of food, I'm afraid you're rather too late for lunch, but would you like Ethel to make you some sandwiches?

GEOFFREY Yes please. They'd run out of them on the train. Have we any ham? Or any fish fingers, I don't suppose? We love them at uni.

URSULA (*confused*) Fish fingers? I'm not really sure. Let me go and see. I may have to despatch Ethel to the Co-op.

*URSULA exits stage left.*

GEOFFREY (*looking at URSULA leaving*) Don't send her on our account - cheese will do. (*to MAUREEN*) So, what do you make of my mother?

MAUREEN She's just as I imagined.

GEOFFREY     *(laughing)* You mean as dotty as you imagined?

MAUREEN     No, she's really lovely. She seems very caring.

GEOFFREY     Well, you wait till you meet my father. He can come across a little scary at first. Boris Karloff's got nothing on him...

MAUREEN     *(laughing)* Don't be so wicked, Geoff. I bet he's really sweet.

GEOFFREY     *(talking quietly so as not to be overheard)* So how are you feeling now? Still feeling sick?

MAUREEN     No, it's passed. I'm feeling a lot better, thanks.

GEOFFREY     *(looking around the room)* So what do you make of this mausoleum?

MAUREEN     *(laughing)* It does seem a bit creepy. I hope I can sleep tonight.

GEOFFREY     *(looking upstairs)* Well, I hope you took careful note of our sleeping arrangements, Mo - separate rooms and as far apart as possible!

MAUREEN     Well you didn't expect us to be sharing a room, did you?

GEOFFREY     No, that would have been too much to expect. I just hope the floorboards don't creak.....

*They both fall about laughing. URSULA returns from the kitchen, stage left.*

URSULA       Now, what's amusing you two?

MAUREEN     *(thinking quickly on her feet)* Er...Geoff was just telling me about the time his head got stuck in the bannisters.

URSULA       Good heavens, yes. That happened at Bayswater Terrace. Geoffrey was only five, poor lad. His father had to use a surgical saw to free him. *(she clasps his head)* Fortunately, there were no scars. Just some missing bannisters!

GEOFFREY     *(embarrassed as his mother ruffles his hair)* Mother, please.

URSULA       Now, I have some good news to report on the sandwich front – Ethel has found a tin of luncheon meat and a jar of fish paste in the pantry. And she has some tomatoes, too. So, she's making you a couple of rounds. They should keep you going until tea time.

MAUREEN     *(trying hard not to pull a face)* Thank you, Mrs Villiers. They sound lovely.

URSULA        You're very welcome, Maureen. Now, why don't you both go upstairs and unpack and freshen-up. Ethel will have your sandwiches ready by the time you come down.

*GEOFFREY and MAUREEN head upstairs with their luggage. URSULA slumps onto the sofa and picks up her magazine again.*

*A few moments.*

*The doorbell rings again.*

Heavens. Now who can that be? *(shouting towards the kitchen, stage left)*  
Ethel. Can you answer the door, please.

ETHEL        *(entering from stage left and mumbling to herself)* No peace for the wicked.

*RAYMOND VILLIERS and LESLIE FRANKLIN arrive. ETHEL opens the door. She is slightly surprised.*

Mr Raymond, is it? *(noticing LESLIE)* Oh.....

RAYMOND    Ethel, I presume? *(he picks her up and twirls her around)* How are you?

ETHEL        *(giggling)* Put me down, Mr Raymond. I'm getting giddy!

RAYMOND    *(almost dropping ETHEL)* This is Leslie, Ethel...

LESLIE       *(shaking her hand)* Hello, Ethel. Good to meet you.

ETHEL        *(bemused and looking LESLIE up and down)* Likewise, I'm sure.

*ETHEL exits, stage left, in a hurry. URSULA gets up from the sofa.*

URSULA       Raymond, there you are. We weren't sure when to expect you.

RAYMOND    *(giving URSULA a cursory hug)* Hello, mother. Sorry, I meant to telephone.  
*(noticing URSULA staring at LESLIE)* And this, mother, is Les.....

LESLIE       *(gently shaking URSULA'S hand)* Hello, Mrs Villiers. A pleasure to meet you at long last...

URSULA       *(confused)* Oh, I thought.....And you're....

LESLIE       *(amused)* You presumed I was female? Sorry, different spelling. And, yes, I'm a black guy. Ray didn't mention it, then?

RAYMOND    My fault again, mother. I thought I had. It's not a problem is it?

URSULA       *(baffled)* No.....No. You're very welcome, Leslie.

RAYMOND     See, I told you it would be fine, Les. *(a moment and looking upstairs)* I hope you can find room for the both of us in this old pile? We don't mind sharing.

URSULA       *(firmly)* That won't be necessary. Ethel has prepared sufficient accommodation - we were expecting you to bring ... er .. a guest, Raymond. But I had better see if she's got enough towels for you.

*URSULA exits hurriedly towards the kitchen, stage left.*

RAYMOND     Well, that didn't go too badly – she's slightly shocked and just a little tetchy, but so far, so good.

LESLIE        So when do you propose explaining that I'm your boyfriend?

*GEOFFREY comes bounding down the stairs, followed by MAUREEN, before RAYMOND has a chance to reply.*

GEOFFREY     Ray! So you decided to turn up, then! What kept you? Fraternising with Dorothy again?

*The two brothers hug each other warmly.*

RAYMOND     Baby brother! *(stroking GEOFFREY'S face)* You started shaving yet? *(they both laugh)*

GEOFFREY     *(pulling MAUREEN close to him)* Ray, meet Mo.

RAYMOND     Hello, Mo. *(they shake hands)* How on earth do you put up with this little swot?

MAUREEN     Oh, he's not so bad, really. *(a brief moment)* Geoff's been telling me all about you.

RAYMOND     Has he now? All the X-certificate stuff, I trust?

GEOFFREY     *(laughing)* Oh yes. The unexpurgated truth, ha-ha.

RAYMOND     "Unexpurgated", eh? I can tell you're benefitting from a university education? *(ushering LESLIE forward)* And this is my very close friend and flat mate, Les. Les, meet the brainier bro, Geoff and his brave girlfriend, Mo.

LESLIE        *(nervously shaking hands with both of them)* Hello. Hello. Pleased to meet you both.

MAUREEN     Hello, Les. Nice to meet you, too.

GEOFFREY     Hello, Les. Likewise. So, do you work in the film world with Ray?

LESLIE            Yes. In the art department - designing film sets.

GEOFFREY        That sounds jolly interesting. Are you working on anything we might have heard about?

LESLIE            Yes. A horror film at Hammer Studios. Have you heard of them?

GEOFFREY        Oh yes. Starring Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. I love them.

MAUREEN        They're too scary for me!

RAYMOND        *(to LESLIE)* So what do you reckon about this dump for one of your film sets, Les? Maybe too decrepit?

*They all laugh.*

*URSULA returns from stage left.*

URSULA          I hope you're not telling any of those risqué, public bar jokes again, Raymond? Your father wouldn't be very impressed....

RAYMOND        No, mother. Strictly, respectable saloon bar jokes here. *(a moment)* So where is the old man, then?

URSULA          *(indignant)* If you're referring to your father, he'll be home shortly. Geoffrey, could you take Raymond and Leslie upstairs to their rooms, please. I'm feeling a little tired right now.

GEOFFREY        Where are you putting them, mother? Up in the attic with the lunatics?

URSULA          *(clutching her forehead)* Raymond's in the box room next to yours – there's only a camp bed, but it should be comfortable enough. And Leslie can have the room next to Maureen's. Ethel will be bringing up fresh towels shortly.

GEOFFREY        *(preparing to head upstairs)* This way, then, chaps. Follow the tour guide. Sixpence a ticket for a trip round the 'House of Usher'. Proceed at your peril.

*They all troop upstairs. URSULA looks cross as she watches them go upstairs, before she returns to the sofa.*

*The lights slowly fade to a black-out.*

**END OF SCENE THREE**

**ACT ONE**

#### SCENE FOUR

*Friday, 20:26 – the lighting is mellow: the wall lights and standard lamp are switched on.*

*When the lights come up, the VILLIERS family (except for RAYMOND and LESLIE) are occupying the sitting room. They have just finished dinner. ETHEL is serving coffee.*

URSULA       *(taking a cup of coffee from ETHEL)* Thank you, Ethel. And thank you also for a splendid welcome home dinner for the boys and their guests.

ARTHUR       Yes, Ethel. You've pulled out all the stops, as usual. I don't know how you do it.

GEOFFREY     It's so nice to have roast chicken again.

ETHEL         *(proudly)* It was the very last chicken in the Co-op.

*She continues to serve coffee to the other family members and then exits stage left.*

ARTHUR       *(irritated)* It was damn rude of Raymond and that friend of his to go off to a public house straight after dinner.....

URSULA       Well, you've only got yourself to blame, Arthur. Lecturing the poor boy all the time.

ARTHUR       And just who is that Leslie person he's brought with him?

URSULA       Just a friend, Arthur. Just a friend.

*A moment.*

MAUREEN     *(trying to lighten the mood)* We only ever have chicken at Christmas.

GEOFFREY     And I bet you only have tangerines and nuts at Christmas too?

URSULA       Geoffrey, stop teasing Maureen. *(turning to MAUREEN)* You must excuse my son's condescension – goodness knows whom he's been mixing with at university.

GEOFFREY     I was only joking. *(he mouths "sorry" to MAUREEN)*

URSULA       I understand you and your family are from Sussex, Maureen?

MAUREEN     Yes, Mrs Villiers. Horsham, actually. But I've got an aunt and uncle living near here though.

URSULA       Really? Might we know them?

MAUREEN Joan and Cyril Middleton? They live in Watford.

URSULA *(dismissive)* No. No. We don't know anybody from Watford. *(a moment)* So, does your father work in Horsham, Maureen?

MAUREEN No, he's a barrister at Lincoln's Inn. Commutes to London every day.

URSULA Oh, that must be so tiring for him.

MAUREEN He's got used to it, but he gets grumpy if his train's delayed or cancelled, and he's late home.

ARTHUR They should never have nationalised the railways. No accountability these days.

URSULA *(looking towards CHARLOTTE VILLIERS and holding her hand)* How are you feeling, my darling? You look so tired. And you hardly ate any dinner.

CHARLOTTE I'm fine, mummy. Honestly.

ARTHUR Stop fussing, Ursula. Charlotte is improving and her appetite is getting stronger. She just needs to rest.

CHARLOTTE I think I'll go to my room, if nobody objects?

URSULA So soon? I was hoping you and Maureen could get to know each other. You young things must have so much to talk about?

MAUREEN It's all right, Mrs Villiers. Charlotte and I can catch up another time. Maybe tomorrow?

ARTHUR That sounds like a sensible idea to me. Let Charlotte rest. She is still recovering from the long journey back from the sanatorium.

CHARLOTTE *(standing up and preparing to go upstairs)* Goodnight then, everyone. And, hopefully, we can talk tomorrow, Maureen?

MAUREEN I do hope so. Goodnight, Charlotte.

GEOFFREY Chin up, Charlie! See you later alligator!

URSULA Goodnight, darling. I'll pop in and see you before I go to bed.

ARTHUR Straight to bed now, young lady. Plenty of rest works wonders. Good night.

*CHARLOTTE exits via the stairs upstage centre.*

URSULA *(looking at MAUREEN)* So how did you and Geoffrey come to meet one another? I suppose it was at a party or a ball? There appears to be more

socialising than studying at university these days, according to what one reads in the newspapers.

GEOFFREY That's jolly unfair, mother. Mo is very studious. *(looking at MAUREEN)* I reckon she's in line for a first. I'll be lucky if I get a two-two.

URSULA *(disappointed)* Well, you must try harder, then. *(to MAUREEN)* Can you please have a word with him, Maureen. Make him pull his socks up. He will need to get his degree before he's called up for National Service.

MAUREEN *(amused)* I think it's Geoff's turn to tease you, Mrs Villiers. He's a brilliant student. He's always got his nose in a book.

URSULA *(with a slight rebuke for GEOFFREY)* Always the joker, young man....

GEOFFREY *(laughing)* Well, you asked for that mother...

ARTHUR *(suddenly joining in the conversation)* National Service, did I hear you say? A waste of time and effort if you ask me – a fat lot of good it did for our Raymond. Made him more insubordinate....

URSULA *(protective)* Must you always pick on Raymond, Arthur?

*An awkward silence*

MAUREEN *(checking her watch)* I think I'll go upstairs now, if that's all right? It's been a long day and I'm feeling rather tired.

URSULA Are you feeling unwell, Maureen? You do look a little pale.

MAUREEN *(glancing briefly at GEOFFREY)* It's just tiredness. Nothing to worry about.

URSULA If you say so. *(a moment)* You remember where we've put you, Maureen?

MAUREEN Yes, Mrs Villiers - the last room on the left.

GEOFFREY Well, if you're going up too, then I'll call it a day. *(looking at URSULA)* And, yes, mother, I do know where my room is. No need to remind me.

MAUREEN Goodnight. Thank you again for a lovely dinner.

URSULA You're very welcome, Maureen. Good night.

GEOFFREY Good night, folks. Up the wooden hill we go....

*MAUREEN and GEOFFREY prepare to exit via the stairs upstage centre.*

URSULA Oh, Geoffrey. It's so good to have you home. *(a brief moment)* Well, most of the time, anyway. Good night.

ARTHUR        Good night, you two.

*A moment, after MAUREEN and GEOFFREY have left the room.*

URSULA        Maureen seems such a lovely girl, Arthur, don't you think?

ARTHUR        Yes, a cut above the others. And from a respectable family, too.

URSULA        I do hope she's not unwell - she did look a little peaky. *(a moment)* You don't think she's....

ARTHUR        *(interrupting)* Good lord, no! How could you ever think such thing of our Geoffrey?

*The doorbell rings.*

URSULA        Now, who can that be? *(calling towards the kitchen, stage left)* Ethel, there's someone at the front door.

*The door bell rings again.*

ARTHUR        Impatient individual.

ETHEL         *(Mumbling as she shuffles on from stage left)* Just as I was about to go home...

*ETHEL answers the door to DETECTIVE INSPECTOR JACK DEACON.*

DEACON        Good evening. I am Detective Inspector, Jack Deacon, Metropolitan Police. *(he produces ID)* Are Doctor and Mrs Villiers at home, please?

ARTHUR        *(quietly to URSULA)* I think it's the police.....

*To URSULA'S great surprise, ARTHUR retreats hurriedly, out of DEACON'S line of sight, to the sanctuary of his laboratory, stage left.*

ETHEL         I'll have to find out. Please wait here.

*DEACON waits in the entrance hall, while ETHEL wanders over to the sofa, where URSULA is finishing her coffee.*

URSULA        *(looking anxious)* Who is it, Ethel?

ETHEL         He says he's a police inspector, Mrs Villiers.

URSULA        *(chuckling)* Not Inspector Goole\*, I hope?

*\* a reference to the mysterious inspector in J.B. Priestley's play: 'An Inspector Calls'.*

ETHEL         *(puzzled)* No. He says his name's Deacon.

URSULA        That's a relief. *(curious)* Did he say why he's here?

ETHEL         *(becoming impatient)* No, Mrs Villiers. He just asked if you and the doctor were at home.

URSULA        Oh very well, you had better show him in, then.

*ETHEL returns to the entrance hall.*

ETHEL         Mrs Villiers will see you now. This way, please.

*ETHEL leads DEACON over to where URSULA is sitting. ETHEL collects up the coffee cups etc and exits stage left.*

DEACON        Good evening, Mrs Villiers. Sorry to trouble you. But I need your help.

URSULA        Good evening, Inspector. And just how can I help you? That's if I can, of course.

DEACON        May I sit down?

URSULA        Yes, please do.

DEACON        *(he sits on the adjacent armchair)* We're trying to locate the whereabouts of one of your neighbours, a Mrs Irene Timpson. Her husband has reported her missing.

URSULA        *(worried)* Missing? So Irene didn't return home, then? Eric turned up here late last night in an agitated state. He was hoping she might have been here.

DEACON        He's told us about his visit. Apparently, Mrs Timpson was here earlier last night?

URSULA        Yes, she had popped over to introduce herself - we've not long moved in. And I showed her round the house, and then we had a cup of tea.

DEACON        What time would that have been?

*URSULA notices that IRENE'S umbrella is still on the sofa and covers it discreetly with a cushion.*

URSULA        Just before eight-thirty, I think.

DEACON        Did she speak with Dr Villiers, your husband?

URSULA        Yes, she did. And he showed her round his laboratory.

DEACON        *(surprised)* Your husband has a laboratory here at home?

URSULA        Yes, Inspector. In the basement. It's for his research work.

DEACON        I see. And what time did Mrs Timpson leave?

URSULA        I'm not really sure. I had an awful migraine attack and went to bed and left Irene with my husband. But it would have been long before ten, I would imagine.

DEACON        Is Dr Villiers at home now? It would be most helpful to have his confirmation.

URSULA        *(a brief moment)* No. He's probably still at the Northcliffe. He's a consultant there.

DEACON        Perhaps you could ask him to telephone me at the police station? *(handing her his business card)* Here's my telephone number. My colleagues will take a message if I'm not there.

URSULA        Yes, of course, Inspector.

DEACON        *(referring to his notebook)* One last thing, Mrs Villiers – I understand that your husband made a telephone call to the Northcliffe hospital late last night, enquiring after Mrs Timpson?

URSULA        Yes, it was my idea. Eric was so worried that I asked my husband to check whether Irene had been taken into hospital. I thought she might have had an accident, or something?

DEACON        *(pointing at the front door)* You mean an accident crossing the road on her way home?

URSULA        Yes, I know it sounds rather foolish, but I was trying to be helpful. To put poor Eric's mind at rest. And it was raining heavily.....

DEACON        *(standing up getting ready to leave)* Yes, I believe it was raining last night. Did Mrs Timpson have an umbrella with her when she arrived here?

URSULA        I really can't remember, Inspector. Why do you ask?

DEACON        Well, it might help to jog somebody's memory if she was known to be holding an umbrella in the rain at that late hour. Especially if we knew its colour. You never know, but I'll check with her husband. *(a moment)* Well, thank you for your time, Mrs Villiers. You have been very helpful. I may need to call upon you again and speak with your husband. But please don't forget to ask him to telephone me in the meantime. Don't get up. I can see myself out. Good night.

URSULA        I shan't forget and goodnight, Inspector. I'm sure Irene will turn up safe and sound very soon.

*DEACON leaves from the front door, stage right. URSULA stands up and looks over towards the curtain covering the door to the basement. After a few moments, the curtain is drawn back and ARTHUR returns.*

URSULA        *(coldly and looking directly at ARTHUR)* I suppose you heard all of that?

ARTHUR        Yes. It was the police. So Eric's officially reported Irene missing?

URSULA        Is there anything you want to tell me, Arthur?

*The lights slowly fade to a black-out.*

## END OF SCENE FOUR

### ACT ONE

#### SCENE FIVE

*Friday, 23:05 – the lighting is low – only the wall lights are on.*

*When the lights come up, RAYMOND and LESLIE are returning from the public house. Another thunder storm is brewing outside. Distant rumblings of thunder punctuate the stillness of the hour.*

*RAYMOND opens the front door and almost stumbles into the room with LESLIE following behind.*

RAYMOND      So glad they've left the lights on....

LESLIE        *(loudly)* I'm gonna piss myself if I don't get to the bog... *(he barges past RAYMOND)*

RAYMOND      *(closing the door behind him)* Use the downstairs loo and keep your voice down. We don't want to wake the old man.

*LESLIE exits stage left. RAYMOND slumps onto the sofa. LESLIE returns, stage left, after a short while. The storm outside continues to rage; there are intermittent flashes of lightning followed by rumbling thunder.*

LESLIE        Looks like the storm's getting worse. *(looking around)* I don't suppose there's a drinks cabinet? I wouldn't mind a nightcap. *(he joins RAYMOND on the sofa)*

RAYMOND     Drinks cabinet? You'll be lucky. But I reckon the old man keeps a stash of scotch in his lab. And mother's probably got some sherry hidden away somewhere.

*RAYMOND takes a packet of cigarettes from his jacket pocket and lights one up.*

LESLIE        Oh never mind. *(looking directly at RAYMOND)* I've been meaning to ask you - what's the real reason for this jolly family get-together?

RAYMOND     "Real reason"? Like I said – mother keeps banging on about us not getting together that often, nowadays. I've not seen any of the family since last Christmas, or was it the Christmas before? And what with Charlie and Geoff being here this weekend at the new house, it seemed right to make the effort. I know it's not been a bundle of laughs so far. Hopefully, we can escape tomorrow on an early train back to London, and have some fun in Soho.

LESLIE        *(putting his arm round RAYMOND)* That sounds truly wonderful – there's this fab new club in Rupert Street I want to take you to.....

*ARTHUR makes a sudden appearance at the top of the stairs and hurries down.*

ARTHUR       *(confrontational)* What in heaven's name are you two up to down here? I'll have none of that deviant behaviour in my house, if you don't mind. Show some respect and consideration, for God's sake! And get rid of that cigarette at once – it's a filthy habit.

*LESLIE and RAYMOND stand up in surprise. RAYMOND looks for an ash tray, but is unable to find one. He rushes towards the front door, stage right, opens it and chucks the cigarette out with contempt.*

RAYMOND     *(riled)* "Deviant behaviour" - we're just having a chat before turning in, that's all. Just what is it you're accusing us of, father?

ARTHUR       *(provocative)* You know very well what I mean – do I really need to spell it out for you?

RAYMOND     *(goading)* Well why don't you say it then, if you've got the balls...

LESLIE        *(standing between RAY and ARTHUR)* Leave it, Ray. Go to bed. *(looking directly at ARTHUR)* Sorry if we woke you, Dr Villiers. Goodnight.

*RAYMOND glares at ARTHUR, but says nothing more. RAYMOND and LESLIE go upstairs. ARTHUR remains silent and watches them until he is satisfied that they have gone into their separate rooms.*

*ARTHUR switches off the wall lights – the set is bathed in blue light to suggest the late hour.*

*ARTHUR exits, stage left, through the curtained door leading to his laboratory.*

*A flash of lightning momentarily illuminates the ghastly form of a ghost-like, IRENE standing on the upstairs landing. Her face is pale and her eyes look hollow. She disappears instantly as the lightning dissipates. A violent crack of thunder shakes the house.*

*The curtain falls.*

### **END OF ACT ONE**

### **INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES**

*Recommended interval music, reprise: 'Allegretto' (10 minutes approx.) – second movement from Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 in A major, op.92*

## **ACT TWO**

### **SCENE ONE**

*Saturday, 02:54. At curtain rise, the setting is exactly the same as we left it at the end of Act One. The set is bathed in dim blue light to suggest the late hour.*

*The violent thunder storm continues to rage. Loud cracks of thunder reverberate around the open-plan sitting room. Random flashes of lightning illuminate the area.*

*There is no activity on stage for about five seconds, while the storm surges outside.*

*Suddenly, in between the thunder claps, a relentless piercing scream from upstairs competes with nature's fury.*

*MAUREEN scrambles from her room and almost tumbles down the staircase. She wears just a white nightdress. She continues to scream and grabs hold of the bannister rail to steady herself. The landing lights are switched on. ARTHUR appears at the top of the stairs in his pyjamas and dressing gown. Thunder and lightning continue unabated.*

ARTHUR        *(alarmed)* What the devil's..... *(he sees MAUREEN below)*

MAUREEN      *(hysterical and looking up at ARTHUR)* There was something in my room!  
Clawing at my face! Trying to bite me!

ARTHUR        *(rushing down the stairs)* It was probably our cat.

*ARTHUR puts his arm round MAUREEN and guides her to the sofa.*

The wretched thing shouldn't be in the house.

*Once again, a flash of lightning momentarily illuminates the ghastly form of a ghost-like, IRENE standing on the upstairs landing. She disappears instantly as the lightning dissipates.*

MAUREEN     *(sobbing)* That was **NO** cat, I tell you! It was....**EVIL!**

ARTHUR       *(with tenderness and discreetly examining her neck)* Whatever it was has gone now. There is nothing to fear here. I assure you.

MAUREEN     *(shaking her head)* No, that's not true. You didn't see it. You didn't feel its foul breath on your face. There **WAS** something in my room, I tell you! Something horrible!

*GEOFFREY, wearing just pyjamas, and reacting to the commotion, almost falls down the stairs in an effort to comfort his distraught MAUREEN.*

GEOFFREY     *(alarmed)* What's going on? What is it, Mo? What's happened?

*Another lightning flash briefly reveals the spectre of IRENE at the top of the staircase.*

MAUREEN     *(slowly with emotion)* Geoff....listen to me.....there was something in my room....a creature....it was evil.....clawing at my face....hideous staring eyes...you have to believe me! *(she bursts into tears again)*

GEOFFREY     *(trying desperately to comfort her)* You were having a bad dream, Mo. That's what it was. All that cheese at dinner. And what with Les and me nattering on about horror films probably stirred up memories of that vampire film we saw at the Gaumont last week. It's all been a bad nightmare. You'll be all right. Come here you silly sausage. *(he tries to hug her)*

ARTHUR       *(looking at GEOFFREY)* I really think it was the cat. It must have got shut in....

*A further flash of lightning lights up IRENE, standing just a few feet away at the bottom of the stairs. She stands motionless, almost trance-like.*

MAUREEN     *(looking up with tears streaming down her face and pulling away from GEOFFREY)* It was **NO FUCKING CAT** and I was **NOT FUCKING DREAMING!** Why don't you believe me for God's sake?

*ARTHUR and GEOFFREY are momentarily shocked by MAUREEN'S robust outburst. They are both silent for a few moments.*

ARTHUR       *(briefly looking at the window and addressing GEOFFREY)* The storm's abating. It will be getting light soon. Why don't you take Maureen back to your room. Try and get a few hours sleep. Things will seem different in the morning.

*IRENE disappears back upstairs in between the lightning flashes.*

MAUREEN      *(pleading)* I can't stay here another night, Geoff. I want to go to Auntie Joan's. Please can we go there? Please.

GEOFFREY      I'll take you there in the morning, I promise. But we'll all be laughing about this at breakfast. You'll see....

MAUREEN      No. I won't stay here a moment longer than I have to.....

*Suddenly MAUREEN is racked with excruciating physical pain. She clasps her stomach with both hands. She has severe stomach cramping. She cries out in agony.*

**Geoff! I think it's the baby! Help me, please!**

*MAUREEN is experiencing a miscarriage. Her nightdress becomes soiled with blood. She continues to writhe and cry out in agony during the next few speeches.*

GEOFFREY      *(directly at ARTHUR)* **Do something, father, for God's sake!**

ARTHUR        *(shocked)* Baby?! Maureen's pregnant?! How could you be so irresponsible? You're not even engaged!

GEOFFREY      *(angry)* This is no time to lecture us on our morals, father! Help her! You're the doctor round here!

ARTHUR        *(with dignity)* I need to examine you, Maureen. May I?

*MAUREEN nods approval and ARTHUR lifts her nightdress discreetly to examine her. GEOFFREY looks away out of respect.*

*She's haemorrhaging badly – it looks like evidence of foetal tissue – I think she's lost the baby, Geoffrey. There's nothing I can do for you, Maureen. I am so sorry.*

MAUREEN      **No! No! No! My baby!** *(she becomes hysterical)*

GEOFFREY      *(trying hard to comfort MAUREEN and holding both her hands)* We can try again, Mo. Once you've got over this, we can try again. *(looking at ARTHUR*

*for reassurance*) Mo can have another baby - can't she father? I mean loads of first-time mums lose their babies during the early months, don't they?

MAUREEN *(whimpering)* My baby.....My baby.....

ARTHUR *(not responding to GEOFFREY'S concerns)* I think we should take Maureen downstairs to my surgery, Geoffrey, where I can treat her and make her more comfortable. She will need plenty of rest. I fear that whatever it was that upset her so badly earlier was probably responsible for her miscarriage. *(a moment)* But not a word of any of this to your mother and the others. No point upsetting them unnecessarily.

GEOFFREY *(anxious)* But what will I say to them? Won't they be concerned when they discover how poorly Mo's become?

ARTHUR Just leave everything to me. If Maureen's feeling strong enough to travel in the morning, I'll drive you both over to her aunt's at Watford. And I'll come up with a plausible explanation to keep your mother and the others happy. *(firmly)* Now, help me take Maureen down to my surgery. And you, young man, need to get some rest too.

*ARTHUR and GEOFFREY help a sobbing MAUREEN to her feet, and make their way slowly to the door to the laboratory, stage left.*

*The lights fade to a black-out.*

**END OF SCENE ONE**

