

Marreau and the Curse of Cardiff

A detective comedy in two acts by Rob Farrow

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Act I Scene 1

Period : Early 1930's : Sofa, two armchairs, table, 2 chairs.

Marreau is sitting in an armchair [S.R.] reading a newspaper

Simpson is peering out of the window [S.R.]

Gwendolyn is reading a book, whilst sitting on the sofa.

Marreau speaks with an appalling "French" accent.

Simpson I say, there's a little rabbit out there on the lawn.

Marreau A rabbit, hey - what is it doing ?

Simpson Well it's just nibbling the grass really.

Gwend Fascinating.

Simpson Oh now it's sort-of squatting down -

Gwend Alright Simpson, we don't need a blow by blow account !

Simpson Oh, I see - how did you know it was going to do that Gwenders ?

Gwend One picks up these little things !

Simpson Do you ? Are they lucky then ?

Gwend What ?

Simpson I mean I know a rabbit's paw is supposed to be lucky -

Marreau That depends if it is still attached to the rabbit or not !

Simpson So what do you do with them Gwenders ?

Gwend What do you do with what ?

Simpson The little current things - after you've picked them up ?

Gwend Oh good grief -

Marreau Do you remember the case of the rabbit's paw, Gwendolyn ?

Gwend Could I ever forget it ?!

Marreau That was quite a challenge was it not ?

Gwend Well, we'd probably have found it easier to solve if you'd driven us to the right house !

Simpson Oh yes, I remember that - they were quite surprised when you got the police to arrest their butler for obstruction.

Marreau Yes, well, I do not think we need to go into the details.

Gwend So, Marreau, you have yet to tell us what we are doing in Wales, a principality you have hitherto described as being full of wet sheep.

Marreau Duty calls, my dear Gwendolyn. There is a most mysterious case which has remained unsolved for many years, and it centres around this house.

Gwend Oh, this sounds rather intriguing, Marreau.

Marreau Indeed, my dear, it is one of the most baffling and impenetrable mysteries of all time. The police have recently given up trying to solve it, and therefore I believe it is my duty to show that Marreau the Magnificent has the greatest detective mind in the world.

Gwend I just hope I'm up to it !

Marreau Just so, my dear Gwendolyn, I shall be relying on your able note-taking abilities.

Gwend [*Flatly*] And that's all is it Marreau.

Simpson So Marreau, what is this mystery.

Marreau It is the case of the Curse of Cardiff !

Simpson Crikey ! The Cardiff curse case !

Marreau You have heard of it then, Simpson.

Simpson No, [*slight pause*] but it sounds jolly interesting.

Gwend Let me think. This rings a bell - doesn't it have something to do with the discovery of an ancient tomb in Egypt.

Marreau Indeed, the tomb of Ramhaken the fifth, king of the Upper Nile around 3000 B.C.

Simpson Gosh, that's a long time ago.

Marreau As you say my friend, and as such some of the clues may be a little obscure.

Simpson Strange place, Egypt - things just disappear there.

Marreau Really ?

Simpson Yes, I remember once when I was in Cairo - my wallet just disappeared - gone without trace it was. Most peculiar.

Gwend Um. Perhaps not quite as surprising as you might think.

Simpson So what's that got to do with this house ?

Marreau Well Professor Leeding lives here, he led the original dig five years ago, when they finally broke through into the inner chamber.

Simpson Gosh.

Marreau And every year since on the anniversary of their discovery, some unfortunate accident has befallen someone in this house.

Gwend Oh wonderful - would I be right in thinking that the anniversary is quite close at hand ?

Marreau Precisely my dear, in fact it is tomorrow.

Gwend I think I might spend the day at the seaside.

Marreau Surely you are not superstitious, Gwendolyn.

Gwend Well no, not as a rule - I just don't believe in pushing my luck !

Marreau I think that we will find that luck has nothing to do with this case.

Simpson So what sort of accidents have happened, Marreau.

Marreau Well, on the first anniversary, the whole expeditionary team met here for a reunion dinner - and Guy Bletherington who was chief engineer, choked to death on a pea.

Gwend [*Flatly, restating*] A pea.

Marreau Indeed.

Gwend A rare occurrence, I would venture.

Marreau On the second anniversary, they held a memorial dinner for Bletherington.

Gwend Sounds like a mistake to me !

Marreau Just so my dear - the dinner went off without incident - however, an hour or so afterwards, Oliver Penrose who jointly financed the project tripped over a stair rail and fell down the stairs to his death.

Simpson Dear me, dashed unlucky.

Marreau On the third anniversary they all got together to discuss another project.

Gwend They don't catch on very fast do they. What happened this time ?

Marreau Well this was a most strange and peculiar incident.

Simpson I bet somebody got killed.

Gwend I think you're onto a good bet there Simpson.

Marreau It was Alexander Marchmain this time, he was from the British Museum. Professor Leeding was showing him round his private museum when there was a telephone call for him. He left Marchmain studying some artefacts. When he returned - no Marchmain.

Simpson I say - where on earth had he gone to ?

Marreau You may well ask - it took them several days to find him, and then only due to a rather unpleasant odour.

Gwend I've got a feeling I'm not going to like this very much.

Marreau He was found in a mummy's sarcophagus, there was not a mark on him, but there was a terrified expression on his face.

Simpson Gosh -

Marreau What is more there was no sign of the mummy that had been there.

Gwend I presume this is when the police got involved.
 Marreau Just so my dear, up until that point they had treated the deaths as unfortunate coincidences.
 Gwend Well you might as well complete the picture - what happened last year ?
 Marreau As you can imagine, none of the team were exactly looking forward to the fourth anniversary.
 Gwend No, I can't say that I blame them.
 Marreau However, as with this year, they decided not to be ruled by superstition, and they met up again - they stayed together as much as possible so that they would witness anything that happened.
 Gwend So what did happen.
 Marreau Unfortunately, they had omitted to consider calls of nature.
 Simpson Oh dear !
 Marreau Quite ! Percival Napier-Smith, another Egyptologist was the first to require the facilities, this was most unfortunate for him.
 Simpson What on earth happened ?
 Marreau He drowned !
 Gwend & Simpson [*Together*] Drowned ?!
 Gwend Not in the
 Marreau Precisely.
 Gwend How on earth could that happen ?
 Marreau Well the police report came to the conclusion that as he entered the toilet he tripped, fell headlong into the - um - appliance, was knocked unconscious by the back of the bowl and drowned in the water.
 Simpson Now that is bad luck !
 Gwend Yes I would think the number of Egyptologists who've drowned to death in a toilet must be few.
 Marreau The most intriguing part is how the deaths have stayed consistent with the curse found in the tomb.
 Gwend Oh ?
 Marreau Yes, I have a copy of the translation here. { *Gets out piece of paper* }

[*reads*]

*"The first will die in eating food
 The second falls and breaks his skull
 Entombment closes up the third
 A watery end will find the fourth"*

Simpson It doesn't rhyme very well, does it ?
 Marreau No, it was probably better in the original hieroglyphics.
 Gwend Is that where it ends, with the fourth death ?
 Marreau No and that's the most worrying part.
 Gwend Oh ?
 Marreau Yes the final lines are as follows :-

*"When the sun has through the seasons run five times
 Then all but one of those that break the sanctity of this vault
 Will fall from life like leaves from the tree
 And he that remains will"* [Pause]

Gwend Go on Marreau
Marreau Unfortunately the stone was broken at this point, so that's all !
Gwend So according to the curse all but one of the team will die tomorrow !
Marreau Just so, my dear, and that is why we are here.

[By this point, Marreau is S.R., Gwend is centre B/S, Simpson is S.L.]
[Professor Leeding enters S.L., he is very short-sighted. He goes straight over to Simpson]

Leeding Um, [To Simpson] You must be Marreau.
Simpson Me ? Good grief no.
Leeding Oh dear, where is he then.
Marreau I'm here.
Leeding What ? Who said that ?
Marreau It is I, Marreau the Magnificent.
Leeding Where ?
Marreau Here. [Marreau goes over to Leeding]
Leeding Ah, Monsieur Marreau - I'm afraid I've put my specs down somewhere - can't see a dashed thing without them.
Gwend Are these they. [Hands him glasses from side or table]
Leeding [He puts them on] Thank-you Miss, er Miss
Marreau This is Miss Gwendolyn Bayne, my secretary.
Gwend Assistant.
Leeding Sorry I didn't greet you when you first arrived, I trust my daughter, Angela looked after you alright.
Marreau Indeed, a most delightful, charming, and may I say, attractive girl.
Gwend Uh-o.
Leeding It's so good of you to come - do you intend to stay long ?
Marreau Until this mystery is solved !
Leeding Well I hope you have more luck than the police or you'll be here for years.
Marreau Luck ? Luck ? Marreau the great French detective does not rely on luck !
Leeding No, of course, just an expression. - I thought you were Belgian.
Gwend Only sometimes.
Leeding If I can be of any help don't hesitate to ask ...
Gwend Professor, the third death, Marchmain, did the police ascertain the cause of death ?
Leeding Yes, rather unpleasant; he suffocated.
Gwend Suffocated ?
Leeding Well those sarcophagi are pretty airtight once they slam shut !
Simpson Did they ever find the missing mummy ?
Leeding No - though that's another curious thing - last year two of my guests said they'd seen it walking along the landing !
Simpson Good grief !
Marreau *Sacre Bleu* this is most intriguing.
Gwend I'm definitely going to the seaside tomorrow ! A bit of cold-blooded murder I can put up with, but Pharaoh's curses and walking mummies are just not my cup of tea !
Leeding Do not worry my dear, the curse only applies to those of us that entered the tomb.
Gwend [Not greatly reassured] Urm.
Simpson I say, did you find anything interesting in the tomb ?
Leeding Good Heaven's man - yes - it wasn't quite the treasure trove that old Carter found ...
Marreau You refer, no doubt, to Jean-Michel Carter, the famous French adventurer.

Leeding *Who ?* No, Howard Carter - you know Tutankhamen and all that.
 Marreau Ah, yes - I do recollect something about that.
 Simpson So what happened to all the goodies ?
 Leeding [*Contemptuously*] Goodies ?
 Gwend I think what Simpson is asking is what was done with the artefacts you found ?
 Leeding Oh, Yes, well the Egyptian authorities kept most of them, but we were allowed to keep quite a few things.
 Marreau Are they of any value ?
 Leeding Immense historical value.
 Gwend What about monetary value ?
 Leeding Not really - except perhaps the set of ten gold cats encrusted with emeralds and lapis lazuli.
 Marreau And who now owns these cats ?
 Leeding As there were ten members in the team we decided it was fairest if we had one each.
 Simpson Lucky there weren't eleven of you ha ha
 Gwend And who stands to inherit these cats ?
 Leeding I suppose whoever's in each of the wills - I'm not sure - they're all on loan to the British Museum at the moment. You'd best have a word with Palgrove, he drew up the legal gubbins.
 Marreau Thank-you Professor, we will do that.
 Leeding Would you excuse me for a while - I've got to help Angela get the place ready for the rest of the guests.
 Marreau Of course Professor. [*Leeding exits*]
 Marreau So what do you think Gwendolyn ?
 Gwend Well, Marreau - what I think is that I'd rather be curled up in front of the fire at home with a good book and a cup of Ovaltine, actually.
 Simpson Gosh no, Gwenders - this is much more exciting.

[**Angela enters with New Mexico Smith (Mexi)**]

Marreau Ah, Mademoiselle Angela, do come in

Angela Hello, can I introduce everyone; this is Mr. Smith, this gentleman here is Monsieur Marreau

Mexi The great Swiss detective ?

Gwend Belgian.

Simpson French.

Marreau Luxembourg, actually.

Gwend Are you sure this time, Marreau.

Mexi It's an honour, sir.

Marreau I know.

Angela And that is Major Simpson

Mexi We've met before haven't we ?

Simpson Um [*Thinks*] Yes, we have - Tibet 1924.

Mexi So it was. Yeti hunt.

Simpson That's the one !

Mexi Well I'll be a cow-poker's saddlebag.

Simpson Really ?

Angela And this lady is Miss Gwendolyn Bayne.

Mexi New Mexico Smith at your service, ma'am. [*He kisses her hand*] Please call me 'Mex'.

Gwend [*Twang !*] Um, perhaps I won't go to the seaside after all.

Angela Well if you'll excuse me, I'll finish getting the rooms ready. [**Exit**]

Mexi We had quite a time on that Yeti trip, didn't we Simmo !

Simpson I'll say ! Didn't rate the food much.

Mexi No, dried Yak-meat's a bit of an acquired taste !

Simpson What have you been up to then Mex ?

Mexi Oh this and that - been up the Amazon a few times, discovered half-a-dozen lost cities, wrestled with couple crocodiles down in Australia - you know the usual stuff.

Simpson [*Not sarcastically*] Oh, nothing special then.

Mexi No, life's been a bit boring I'm afraid. I could do with a real adventure like *we* used to have.

Simpson Fancy popping to the Pole when you've got some time free ?

Mexi North or South ?

Simpson Don't mind.

Mexi Yeh, sounds like fun - fix it up will you, Simmo.

Simpson Righty-ho.

Mexi [*To Marreau*] Are you gonna solve this Curse of Cardiff business for us then Mon-sewer Marreau.

Marreau Mon sewer ! What is mon sewer ?! "*M'syeu*" is how you say it !

Mexi I'm sorry - we yanks y'know just can't get used to your English pronunciations !

Marreau English ? I am French !

Simpson Thought so.

Mexi Well sorry anyway - Musher.

Marreau Zut Alors I suppose I will have to put up with 'Musher'. To answer your question about the curse - Yes indeed, I do intend to solve the mystery.

Gwend Have you got any ideas Mex ?

Mexi Well it ain't any goddam mummy doing this - and it ain't no accident either.

Simpson Why d'you say it's not the mummy, Mex ?

Mexi Oh come on Simmo, you don't believe all that hogwash do ya - if all the curses I've had laid on me came true I'd have six heads, no legs, and be an interesting shade of green - not to mention the fact that I'd already have died of being variously squashed, decapitated, sucked to death by the great leech of Condor, and on top of all that I'd be impotent ! None of which has come true - [*To Gwend*] particularly not the last bit.

Gwend I'm glad to hear it !

Mexi No, old Mexi's still got all his faculties.

Gwend So you are suggesting that the deaths are in fact murders.

Mexi I couldn'a put it better myself.

[[**Blackout**]]

Act I Scene 2

Scene: The same

Marreau and Gwendolyn are studying notes at the table.

[Prof. Leeding enters]

Leeding Well, Marreau - had any ideas yet ?

Marreau The little red cells they are - how you say - disgusting the information.

Gwend Digesting, Marreau.

Marreau Quite so.

Leeding Damned good show - it'll be good to get this cleared up once and for all. Did you want to have a word with Percy, he's just arrived ?

Marreau Percy ?

Leeding Percy Palgrove, he's our real brains in the outfit, does all our translating and legal work.

Marreau I don't think so

Gwend Yes, we'd like to have a word with him, wouldn't we Marreau ?

Marreau What ? Would we ?

Gwend Yes, we would.

Marreau Oh, yes, of course, show him in.

[Leeding exits]

Gwend If Mex is right and these *are* murders, then we'd better look for a motive, and to me these jewel-encrusted cats seem to fit the bill.

Marreau Indeed, my dear Gwendolyn, that is just what I was thinking - however, if the next-of-kin inherits, I fail to see how murder would help their cause.

Gwend You're quite right Marreau - that's why I think we ought to have a word with

[Leeding enters with Percy Palgrove (Palgrove)] [Palgrove is very dour, no sense of humour]

Leeding Percy Palgrove, everybody.

Gwend Right on cue.

Leeding ... If you'll excuse me [Leeding exits]

Palgrove I believe you wanted a word with me.

Marreau Indeed Monsieur Palgrove, we are trying to solve the Curse of Cardiff.

Palgrove Wretched business, wish I'd never got mixed up in the whole thing.

Gwend I believe you sorted out the legal business with regards the cats.

Palgrove Yes, no use to man-nor-beast.

Marreau But very valuable

Palgrove Well I suppose so, never really bothered finding out.

Gwend Who owns the cats which belonged to the deceased members of the team.

Palgrove Urm, well everyone really.

Gwend Oh, how do you mean ?

Palgrove Well the ownership of the cats was arranged by way of a tontine. {Pronounced "Tonteen"}

Marreau A what ?

Palgrove A tontine.

Marreau I thought that was something to do with teeth !

Gwend That's dentine Marreau; a tontine - now that is interesting.

Marreau Is it ?

Gwend Yes very. Am I right in thinking, Mr. Palgrove, that this means that the last member of the team to stay alive inherits the lot ?

Palgrove Well, putting it crudely I suppose it does, yes.

Marreau Aha - our motive - the culprit claims the Curse of Cardiff cat collection !

Palgrove Motive ? You think someone is murdering members of the team in order to inherit a few gold cats ?

Marreau Precisely.

Palgrove That's ridiculous - we're none of us badly off you know - and the cats aren't worth that much anyway !

Gwend You said you didn't know how much they were worth.

Palgrove Oh, well, I had to get mine insured - it's only covered for a hundred pounds.

Marreau So ten of them would be worth a thousand pounds - quite a handsome sum.

Palgrove Well yes, but hardly sufficient to warrant nine murders !

Gwend Murder has been committed for a lot less than that sort of money, Mr. Palgrove.

Palgrove I suppose so - but surely only in the lower classes !

Marreau So you think they were simply accidents, do you ?

Palgrove Well, I hesitate to say it, but I think it's the curse.

Gwend Why did you arrange the inheritance to be by way of a tontine.

Palgrove It seemed only right that the cats should not be split up - and a tontine was the simplest way to ensure they remained together.

Gwend I see; thank-you for your help, Mr. Palgrove - we may want to talk to you later.

Palgrove Oh very well - *[Turns to go]* - I hope you don't intend to use up too much of my time. **[Exits]**

Marreau So, we have our motive

Gwend So it would seem - and I'm not at all convinced by Palgrove's apparent disdain for money.

Marreau No I cannot say that I like that man very much.

[Simpson enters]

Simpson I say, wasn't that old Spotty Palgrove I just saw.

Gwend You know him, Simpson ?

Simpson Went to school with him - can't say as I ever liked the chap; very snobby - brain the size of a pregnant elephant, but no manners.

Marreau Just the impression we had formed, was it not Gwendolyn.

Gwend Yes - is he rich do you know, Simpson ?

Simpson Old Spotty ? Oh, gosh yes - he inherited an absolute fortune from his father - one of those self-made-men jobbies his father was. Rags to riches story and all that.

Gwend Really - so his father was from what you might call the lower classes ?

Simpson Absolutely - only met him once - fascinating chap - started off as a rag and bone man - but I'll tell you, he had better manners than old Spotty.

Marreau Most intriguing.

[Emily Danvers enters]

Emily Hello, am I interrupting anything ?

Marreau Ah, you must be Miss Danvers.

Emily Please call me Emily.

Simpson [*Likes what he sees*] I say - would you like a chair.

Emily Thank-you [*sits*], you must be Major Simpson.

Simpson Well, yes, I suppose I am.

Emily Mexi's told me all about you.

Simpson Has he ? [*Slight pause*] Oh dear.

Gwend [*Somewhat jealously*] Oh, you know Mr. Smith, do you.

Emily Mr. Smith ? [*Pause*] Oh, Mexi - sorry [*Archly*] I've never heard anyone call him Mr. Smith before.

Gwend Um.

Emily Yes, of course I know him - we went on the expedition together.

Gwend [*Surprised*] You went on the Ramhaken expedition ?

Emily Yes, it was great fun - shame about the curse !

Gwend [*Dismissively*] So what did you do on the expedition ?

Emily Oh, I just stood around and looked pretty most of the time.

Marreau What ?

Emily Yes, I was a sort of mascot.

Gwend [*Not impressed*] Oh my saintèd aunt - Has anyone invented the word 'Bimbo' yet ?

Marreau I don't know.

Gwend Well consider it invented - and used.

Simpson Well I think you make a jolly pretty mascot, whatever Gwenders says.

Emily Why, thank-you Mr.Simpson. Most gallant.

Marreau Indeed, my dear, you are most attractive.

Gwend Alright, alright, don't overdo it. So you didn't contribute anything to the expedition whatsoever !

Emily You mean intellectually ?

Gwend Yes.

Emily No.

Gwend Fine.

Marreau So do you have any theories as to why these deaths are occurring ?

Emily Well, I suppose it must be the curse.

Marreau Are you not worried by this ?

Emily Yes, I'm terrified !

Simpson So why do you keep coming here every year on the anniversary ?

Emily [*Pause*] Because I'm pretty stupid I suppose !

Gwend I'd second that !

Marreau So you do not hold with the idea that someone is murdering the team members one by one ?

Emily Oh; what a horrible thought. But why would they want to kill me ?

Marreau For your cat !

Emily Tibbles ?

Marreau Who ? Who is this Tibbles ?

Emily My little cat - but you must be mistaken there, Monsieur Marreau, I've only had him two months - he's still a kitten really. I mean I know he's very sweet but it would seem a bit excessive to murder me for him !

Gwend Oh, good grief. Monsieur Marreau is referring to the gold cat that you got from the expedition.

Marreau Indeed your little furry pet is of no consequence to this mystery -

Emily I'm glad about that - yes I suppose the cats are worth quite a bit - especially if someone owned all of them.

Marreau Indeed.
Emily Yes I believe they're only worth about a hundred pounds each, but as the set of ten they'd be worth a fortune.
Marreau [*Smugly*] Well a thousand pounds would seem the right amount !
Emily Good grief no - more like twenty thousand.
Marreau Sacre Bleu ! Why is this ?
Emily Well as a set they're absolutely unique - as individual cats there are nine others.
Gwend Our motive suddenly becomes stronger Marreau.
Marreau Thank-you for this information my dear - it is most interesting.
Gwend Tell me, Miss Danvers, how do you know this - about the cats being so much more valuable as a set ?
Emily Oh you-know, one picks up these little things.
Simpson I say are we back onto rabbit droppings ?
Emily What ?
Gwend Don't worry Miss Danvers - Simpson is incredibly stupid.
Emily Oh, I see.
Simpson Thanks Gwenders.

[Enter Victor Dalglish (Victor)]

Victor Hello all. Anybody dead yet, Emmy ?
Emily Oh, hello Victor.
Marreau Ah, you must be Victor Dalglish, the engineer.
Victor That's me. You want a forty ton slab of granite removed from some old Pharaoh's tomb - I'm your man.
Marreau I will bear it in mind.
Victor Or basalt.
Marreau What ?
Victor It doesn't have to be granite - forty ton slabs of anything really; basalt, limestone - you name it, I'll lift it.
Marreau Very useful, I'm sure.
Victor You're not kidding - no way they'd have got into that tomb without me.
Gwend Surely Guy Bletherington was in charge of the engineering side.
Victor That idiot Bletherington wanted to blow it out with dynamite. Can you imagine the mess that would've made; there'd've been bits of mummy all over the place. Good job I told'em we could lift it off with a crane.
Emily Oh, poor Guy. You shouldn't speak ill of the dead, Victor.
Victor I s'pose I shouldn't - but anyone who can choke to death on a pea, must be pretty feeble.
Simpson So you don't think much of the curse either then, Victor.
Victor Well, I don't know. It's strange how the prophecy seems to be coming true. I wonder who's going to buy it this time.
Marreau Buy it ? Buy what ? Do you take it in turns to pay for the meal ?
Victor I say you've got a funny accent - not a greasy Frog are you ?
Marreau [*Glares*] A greasy frog ! How dare you call Marreau the great Belgian detective an amphibian - and a greasy one at that !
Victor Oh, Belgian are you - bad luck - mind you, could be worse - at least you're not French.
Gwend Not at the moment anyway.
Marreau So what is this buying business ? What is it you expect someone to purchase ?
Gwend It's a saying Marreau - what Mr. Dalglish was wondering was who the next victim might be.

Marreau I do not intend there to be a next victim - Marreau the Magnificent will apprehend the murderer before anyone is killed.

Simpson I say, well done Marreau.

Gwend He hasn't done it yet.

Simpson No but he will do.

Emily Well, if you'll excuse me, I think I'll go to bed - it's nearly midnight and I think tomorrow may be a little trying !

Simpson I think I'll join you.

Emily [*Teasing*] Why, Mr. Simpson, that's very forward of you - we've hardly met !

Simpson Oh gosh, no. Gosh, I didn't mean join *you*, I wouldn't dream of it.

Emily [*Still teasing*] Aren't I your sort then ?

Simpson What ? Oh, gosh no, I mean *yes*. I mean you are my sort - I think - well sort of -

Emily I was only teasing you, Mr. Simpson - I knew what you meant really.

Simpson Did you, that's dashed clever - I don't think I did !

Emily I would be glad of your company as far as my room anyway, Mr. Simpson. [*rises*]

Simpson [*Rises*] Oh, right, call me Simon, please.

[*Emily & Simpson exit*]

Gwend Poor old Simpson, he gets really flustered whenever he sees a pretty face !

Marreau I think it is time all of us went to bed, and tomorrow you will all be able to sleep easily - as I will have solved the curse of Cardiff.

Victor If the Great British police force can't work out what's going on, I don't see how some foreigner's going to sort it out.

Marreau "*Some foreigner !*" You are beginning to get on my - how you say - nipples !

Gwend Nerves, Marreau.

Marreau What ?

Gwend He's beginning to get on your nerves.

Marreau I know he is - but that was not the saying I was thinking of.

Gwend I should leave it at that if I were you Marreau !

Victor So you think there's a murderer in our midst do you Marreau ?

Marreau Indeed I do.

[**A clock chimes twelve**]

Marreau [*Spookily*] Ah, midnight - the witching hour - the anniversary is upon us.

Gwend Alright Boris, no need to lay it on with a trowel.

[**Randolph & Zeta Quest enter (R.Quest & Zeta)**]

R.Quest Hello Marreau - remember us ?

Marreau Ah, Monsieur Quest, and the charming Madame Quest - how are you ?

R.Quest Oh, you know, bounding along.

Zeta You do bound a bit actually darling.

Marreau Was it the Case of the Missing Sausage when we met ?

R.Quest That's the one.

Marreau An intriguing case that.

R.Quest Yes no-one expected to find it up there, did they Zeta.

Zeta No they didn't - Least of all the butler !

Marreau Well quite.

Victor I say Quest, do you know this foreign chappy here ?
Marreau I am not a foreign "chappy" I am Marreau the Magnificent - and you are a very impolite person.
Victor Nothing personal - I just don't like foreigners.
Zeta Oh, Victor, Monsieur Marreau's ever-so nice. He can't help it if he's Swiss.
Victor Swiss ?
Marreau Belgian.
Zeta I could have sworn you were Swiss, Marreau.
Gwend I wouldn't let it bother you, Zeta, he may well be Swiss later on.
Zeta I don't really follow - anyway I must say I feel a whole lot safer knowing that you're here Monsieur Marreau.
R.Quest Yes, damned fine show, you turning up like this.
Marreau Indeed, Marreau will protect you - the curse of Cardiff has claimed its last victim.
Victor *[A look of horror in his eyes] The serpents !*
All: What ?
Victor *The serpents, they're coming for me !*
Marreau I see no serpents !
R.Quest *[To Victor]* Steady on old boy, have you been at the bottle again ?
Victor *[Panicky]* Don't you see them writhing, Quest ? The serpents ! *[He grabs R.Quest's tie]*
R.Quest That's not a serpent old boy, that's my tie.
Victor You can't fool me, I know a serpent when I see one ! *[Releases tie]*
R.Quest Come on Victor, why would I be wearing a serpent - hardly the rage, is it.
Marreau Indeed Monsieur Dalglish, I can vouch for the fact that that is indeed
Victor Ramhaken ! The serpents of Ramhaken - they're coming to get me ! *Aaaaghhh !!!*

**[Clutches throat, staggers, gurgles, staggers round to back of sofa,
falls over and dies with feet only showing, sticking out from behind sofa]**

[Blackout]

Act I Scene 3

Scene: The same, the next morning. The room is apparently empty except for Victor's feet poking out from behind the sofa.

Unbeknown to the audience Dr. Protheroe and Inspector Jones are also behind the sofa, examining Victor

After a few moments Marreau, Gwend and Simpson enter, in that order. They are also unaware of Protheroe & Inspector Jones' presence.

***** If curtains are not available to hide Protheroe & Inspector Jones' entrance, then all the cast should come on in the black-out to have a look at the body, with Protheroe and Inspector Jones not going back off.**

Marreau [*To Gwend as he steps over Victor*] I trust you had a good night's sleep my dear.

Gwend As good as could be expected after last night. [*Steps over Victor*] And Simpson blundering about in the early hours of the morning.

Simpson [*Trips over Victor*] I say, are we going to leave poor old Victor's body lying there all day ?

Marreau I hope not, but the doctor and the police must carry out their investigations first.

Gwend What were you doing banging about this morning Simpson ?

Simpson Urm, yes, ur, I suppose I couldn't sleep - I was thinking about poor old Victor, that's right.

Gwend I wonder what he died of - strange the way he was going on about serpents.

Marreau Well hopefully the doctor will be able to shed some light on it.

Protheroe [*Stands up behind sofa*] He was poisoned. [*They all jump*]

[**All wheel round to see Palgrove**]

Marreau Doctor Protheroe, what on earth are you doing here ?!

Protheroe Oh, hello Marreau - thought I recognized the accent.

Marreau Whatever are you doing in Cardiff ?

Protheroe Oh, well little Jimmy kept escaping from the other borstal, so they moved him to this more secure one, and Jane and I followed on.

Gwend I trust little Jimmy is securely under lock and key at the moment.

Protheroe Oh yes. He'd need to blow his way out of the new place with dynamite.

Gwend I'm pleased to hear it. [*Slight pause*] You say Dalglish was poisoned - any idea what sort ?

Protheroe Well, there'll have to be a post-mortem to tell you definitely, but I'd say it was Amanita Phalloides.

Gwend Really, that's interesting.

Marreau What is Amanita whatever-it-was ?

Gwend Death-cap, Marreau.

Marreau But he was not wearing anything on his head, Gwendolyn !

Gwend It's a fungus, Marreau. Death Cap fungus.

Marreau Sacre Bleu Most unusual.

Protheroe Not really, happens quite a lot, people mistake them for mushrooms.

Gwend Would Amanita cause hallucinations ?

Protheroe Not normally - why - *was* he hallucinating ?

Marreau Yes, he thought Monsieur Quest's tie was a snake, most peculiar.

Protheroe Um, that's interesting, perhaps it was a different fungus - or possibly more than one sort - yes, come to think of it, some of the symptoms remind me of Fly Agaric poisoning, muscarine you know, but that's rarely fatal.

Marreau So it would appear he ate a fungi cocktail.

Protheroe How long was he suffering before he died ?

Gwend Oh, just a few seconds.

Protheroe Ah, well that's most strange, although different people react in different ways, Amanita usually causes some pretty nasty effects before actually killing you, and takes several days.

Gwend So what do you think now, Doctor ?

Protheroe I think we'd better wait for the laboratory analysis - but I'd still bet on some sort of fungus.

I/Jones [*Popping up from behind sofa*] Looks like the curse has struck again, isn't it.

[All except Protheroe jump]

Marreau *Zut Alors !* How many more people are there behind the sofa ?

I/Jones There's no-one else.

Marreau And who, precisely are you ?

I/Jones I'm Inspector Jones, Glamorgan police. And you are, I would say, Monsieur Dreadlock Marreau, the famous Dutch detective.

Marreau & Gwend Dutch ???

I/Jones Oh, sorry, have I got the wrong country ?

Marreau I'm French }

Gwend He's Belgian } } [*Together*]

Simpson He's Swiss }

[*Pause {Count 1,2 slowly}*]

Marreau French. }

Gwend French. } } [*Together*]

Simpson French. }

Marreau [*Piqued*] And it's Hemlock, not Dreadlock.

I/Jones Oh, sorry. French is it. Well there you go, and there was I thinking you were Dutch.

Protheroe If you'll excuse me a moment, there are a couple of tests I'd like to carry out.

Marreau By all means, Doctor.

[Protheroe exits]

Gwend So Inspector, what do you make of all this ?

I/Jones Well it's obvious, isn't it.

Marreau Is it ?

I/Jones It's the curse of Cardiff striking again.

Gwend And you're happy to leave it at that are you ?

I/Jones Well, that's what my Super will say; and there's no point me arguing with him, whatever I may really think.

Gwend And what do you really think, Inspector ?

I/Jones Funny business, that's what I think - Now my Super, he's not from round these parts - recently promoted he is - comes here and hears about this investigation that's been going on for four years and he closes the case, doesn't he.

Marreau And why did he do that.

I/Jones Said it was a waste of our time; that it was the Egyptian Pharaoh doing it - said that it wasn't really his line catching Egyptian Pharaohs.

Gwend You still haven't told us what your opinion is.

I/Jones Well, between me and you, Miss, I don't hold with curses and things like that, and to me five deaths in the same house on the same day of the year seems to be pushing a coincidence, isn't it.

Marreau So, just what are you suggesting, Inspector ?

I/Jones Well [*Pause*] [*Deliberately*] I think it's down to the Giant Mad Sheep of Caerphilly !

Marreau What ?!

Simpson Good heavens !

I/Jones [*Laughing*] Just my little joke, that was. No, it's murder isn't it.

Gwend Thank heavens for a bit of sanity at last.

[Angela enters]

Angela Excuse me everybody - Inspector, your Superintendent is here

[Supt. Farmer (Farmer) enters] [Angela exits]

Farmer By 'eck, fancy the curse of Cardiff striking again.

Marreau Oh, Sacre Bleu, now I understand your difficulties, Inspector.

Farmer Well knock me down with one of those long thin onions they 'ave round 'ere, If it's not Monsieur Marreau again.

Simpson I say, are you a Superintendent now, Farmer ?

Farmer Aye, that be right, I got promoted again after that African Moon business, and they thought I'd better stay near that little Jimmy fellow so they moved me down 'ere.

Simpson Congratulations. Do you like it round here ?

Farmer Well, it's alright - they don't 'alf talk funny though !

Marreau Well quite.

Gwend So, you think it's the curse causing all these deaths then, do you, Superintendent ?

Farmer Oh aye, that be about right. Don't do to go messin' around wi' corpses, that's what I always say. And 'specially not those-there Egyptian daddies.

Gwend Mummies.

Farmer No, I think you'll find these are male ones, m'dear !

Gwend They're still mummies.

Farmer Don't be silly m'dear - course they're not. [*Gwend gives up*]

I/Jones I'm surprised to see you here sir, I thought you'd be leaving this to me to sort out.

Farmer Aye, that I am - you carry on - I'm not 'ere about the deaths - I was told Dr. Protheroe was here.

Gwend Yes, he's just

[Protheroe enters]

Protheroe Looking for me ? Oh, Superintendent, it's you.

Farmer It's that darned son of yours Doctor, he's been and gone and escaped again.

Protheroe Oh, no. How on earth did he get out this time ?
 Farmer Blasted 'is way out wi' dynamite.
 Protheroe Little perisher. When was this ?
 Farmer Yesterday evening 'bout six, he seems to have got clean away.
 Marreau Well at least we know it's not little Jimmy doing these murders.
 Farmer Murders ? By 'eck - you don't think these are murders do you Monsieur Marreau.
 Marreau Indeed, I have no doubt whatsoever.
 Farmer But what be the motive for killing a load of egg-heads ?
 Simpson Cats !
 Farmer Cats ? By 'eck, now I'm interested - I haven't 'ad a case involving cats for ages. My speciality they are. Tabbies I'm best at, what sort are these ?
 Gwend Oh good grief - this could be a big mistake Marreau.
 Simpson They're gold ones, Farmer.
 Farmer Gold cats ?! What, ginger are they ?
 Marreau No, these are solid gold with emeralds and lapis lazuli.
 Farmer You're having me on now, aren't you - cats is furry.
 I/Jones Sir, why don't I investigate this while you find little Jimmy, and I'll make a report out for you.
 Farmer Aye, that's a good idea - Well I'd better be on me way
 Protheroe I think I'll come with you. I might be able to help you find little Jimmy.

[Protheroe & Farmer exit]

Gwend Thank heavens for that.
 Marreau Yes, it was in danger of becoming - how you say - too many chefs spoiling the consommé.
 Gwend Close enough Marreau.
 I/Jones You know our superintendent then do you ?
 Marreau Indeed it has been our dubious pleasure for our paths to cross on a couple of occasions.
 I/Jones The way I look at it, if 'e can make Super, then I think I'm in line for the chief constable's job !
 Simpson I say that would be jolly nice.

[Mrs Williams (MrsW) enters]

MrsW If you're wanting any breakfast, then you'd better come now or it'll all be gone - I've never known people eat like these archaeologists do.
 Marreau Ah, Mrs. Williams, did Mr. DalGLISH have anything to eat last night, after he arrived ?
 MrsW Yes, he arrived about seven thirty saying he was peckish, and I made him a nice omelette.
 Gwend An omelette ? Was it just a plain one.
 MrsW Oh, no. Lovely wild mushroom omelette it was.
 Marreau [*lightly*] Oh, dear - I fear you may have killed Mr. DalGLISH !
 Simpson Shall I handcuff her Marreau.
 MrsW [*Hysterical*] What, me, why would I want to kill him ? Are you saying I poisoned 'im ? I wouldn't do a thing like that. I'm a good cook I am. I

Gwend Calm down Mrs. Williams. Marreau, I wish you'd be a bit more tactful at times. We're not saying you did it on purpose, but Mr. DalGLISH probably died from eating poisonous fungi.
 MrsW Fungi ? I wouldn't be giving him fungi to eat, would I ?
 Gwend Tell me, Mrs. Williams, you say they were wild mushrooms, who picked them ?
 MrsW A girl from the village brought them, wanted sixpence for them.

Marreau And you considered this a reasonable price ?
MrsW Oh yes, lovely lot of mushrooms they were.
Gwend Do you know the girl ?
MrsW No, never seen her before, but she said her name was Iris and that she lived in the village.
Marreau And you trusted her choice of mushrooms ?
MrsW Well she said Old Joe the tramp had helped her pick them, and he knows as what you can and can't eat.
Simpson You can't beat hand-picked wild mushrooms. I remember once in Provence

Gwend [*Ignores Simpson*] What time was this, Mrs. Williams ?
MrsW Oh, it was just before poor Mr. Dalglish arrived, about a quarter past seven I'd say.
Gwend [*Depressively*] Oh dear !
Marreau Whatever is the matter Gwendolyn.
Gwend Just a thought, Marreau; forget it for now. Mrs. Williams, if Iris comes to the house again, would you let us know please, I think it would be useful to have a word with her.
MrsW I'll do that.

[There is a "yelp of severe distress" offstage]

Marreau What was that ?
MrsW Sounded like a yelp of severe distress to me !
Gwend Have you been talking to Simpson, Mrs. Williams ?
Marreau Of course it was a yelp of severe distress and from the pitch and duration I would say that we will find that Monsieur Percy Palgrove has been squashed to death by a giant boulder. Probably basalt.
Simpson Gosh ! Are you sure Marreau ?
Marreau No, it may have been granite
Simpson Crikey !
Marreau ... Or possibly limestone, but I'd bet on granite.
Gwend Hadn't we better go and find out ?
Marreau Indeed, Marreau the Magnificent will investigate

[**Blackout**] End of Act I

Act II Scene 1

Marreau is sitting on the sofa, frowning. Gwendolyn is seated S.L., looking through notes. Simpson is peering out of the window. After a few moments, Prof. Leeding enters.

Leeding This is dreadful, is there nothing that can be done to stop these horrible deaths ?
Marreau Indeed, this is most unfortunate.
Simpson Not a very nice way to go !
Gwend The understatement of the decade, Simpson.
Simpson Being squashed like that - poor old Spotty.
Leeding It's made a horrible mess in the museum.
Simpson Excuse me [*exits clutching stomach*]
Leeding I wonder why he was messing about with that tomb lid anyway ?
Gwend Why was the forty ton slab so perilously poised Professor ?
Leeding I must admit it was precariously perched, but it had never occurred to me that anyone would try to read the inscriptions on the underside of it !
Marreau I think we ought to view the scene again; I should imagine Inspector Jones has finished scraping Palgrove off the floor by now.
Leeding Do you want me to come along, Marreau ?
Marreau If you would not mind, Professor, you may be able to help me in my investigations.
Gwend I'll stay here Marreau and go through my notes.
Marreau Very well my dear. [*Marreau & Leeding exit*]

[After a few seconds Mexi enters]

Mexi Miss Bayne, am I disturbing you ?
Gwend Not at all, Mr. Smith.
Mexi Oh, please call me Mex.
Gwend As long as you call me Gwendolyn.
Mexi [*Slight pause*] That's a lovely name.
Gwend Why thank-you Mex.
Mexi Very British - I've never come across a Gwendolyn in New Mexico.
Gwend I can't say as I've come across a New Mexico in Croydon, either.
Mexi Well, that's just my nickname.
Gwend What's your real name ?
Mexi [*Pause*] Herbert.
Gwend [*Slight pause*] Um, I think I prefer Mex.
Mexi So do I. [*He looks into her eyes*]
Gwend Are you worried, Mex ?
Mexi What about ?
Gwend These murders.
Mexi I can look after myself O.K.
Gwend [*Softly*] I'm glad about that, I
Mexi [*Softly*] What is it Gwendolyn ?
Gwend [*Affectionately*] I wouldn't like you to go and get killed - that's all.
Mexi Well that's about the darned nicest thing anyone's ever said to me.
Gwend Is it ? You surprise me.
Mexi [*Getting close*] Well, perhaps it's the way you said it.

Gwend I just said what I felt.
Mexi I'm not used to anyone caring what happens to me.
Gwend Well, I think I care - I don't know why - but I do.

[He goes to kiss her, Gwend is receptive to the advance]
[Just as they are about to kiss, Simpson bounces into the room]

Simpson Hi Gwenders, Mex !

[They part]

Gwend [*Flatly*] Hello Simpson.
Mexi [*Sarcastically*] Wonderful timing Simmo.
Simpson What ? Why has something just happened ?
Gwend [*Flatly*] No, not quite.
Mexi [*Quietly to Gwend*] Shall we finish this conversation another time.
Gwend Gladly.
Simpson They've run out of bicarb.; dashed nuisance.
Gwend A fascinating piece of information, Simpson - I should write a book about it if I were you.
Mexi I was just about to go into the village to get my bullwhip re-thonged, I'll pick some up for you if you like.
Simpson Oh, jolly-D, get me a pound of the stuff would you.
Mexi A pound ?
Simpson Yes, stomach's a bit dicky.
Mexi You've always had that problem haven't you, Simmo. I remember on that Yeti hunt, when one of the Sherpas was eaten by a snow leopard, made you really ill didn't it.
Simpson I'd rather not

Mexi All that was left of him were his boots, with a bit of foot sticking out the top !
Simpson Excuse me [*Exits clutching stomach*]
Mexi [*Waits for Simpson to leave*] I thought that might get rid of him.
Gwend Nicely done, Mex.
Mexi Now then, Miss Bayne, where were we ? [*He goes close to her*]
Gwend [*Kidding*] I can't think what you mean Mr. Smith.
Mexi You have wonderful eyes; close them.

[He is just about to kiss her when Marreau re-enters, excited]

Marreau [*Offstage*] Gwendolyn, [*They part*] [*Onstage*] I have found an important clue - Ah, Monsieur Smith how do you do. [*Marreau is oblivious to the clinch*]
Mexi [*Flatly*] How do I do what, Monsieur Marreau ?
Marreau It is one of your English sayings, is it not; "How do you do", it means hello, or so I have been led to believe.
Mexi I wouldn't know, I'm not English.
Marreau Ah, good point.
Mexi I think I'll mosey on into town.
Marreau You should not leave the house, Monsieur Smith.
Mexi Whyever not.
Marreau Everyone in this house is a suspect, I cannot make exceptions.
Mexi Oh, I suppose not - well I'll phone and get them to collect it then. [*Mexi exits*]

Gwend *[Dryly]* This better be good, Marreau.
Marreau Whatever is the matter with you, Gwendolyn.
Gwend *[Fatalistically]* Oh, nothing - carry on Marreau, what is this earth-shattering development ?
Marreau Well fortunately, Palgrove's left hand wasn't squashed flat like the rest of him ...

[Produces severed hand {e.g. Plaster-of-Paris in a surgical glove}]

[Simpson re-enters]

Simpson I say what's that Marreau ? *[Sees hand, clutches stomach, exits immediately & rapidly]*

Marreau ... and clenched in his hand was this *[Flourishes piece of paper]*

Gwend *[Interested (No longer annoyed)]* Yes, what is it Marreau ?
Marreau It is a scrunched-up piece of paper, Gwendolyn - I would have thought you would have realised this.
Gwend Do you always have to be so pedantic, what does it say ?
Marreau It is some kind of legal document.
Gwend Let me have a look.

[Gwend goes over to Marreau and plucks the paper from his hand] [Pause as she looks at it]

Marreau What do you make of it, Gwendolyn ?
Gwend Interesting - very interesting indeed.
Marreau Oh ?
Gwend It is a loan agreement, and it would appear that it is secured.
Marreau Secured ? You mean it is stuck to something ?
Gwend What ? No, whoever took this loan out had put up security.
Marreau What ? Like a barbed wire fence ?

[Simpson re-enters]

Gwend Oh good grief; security - to cover the debt - in case of default.
Marreau Ah I see *[He doesn't]*
Simpson I say Gwenders, can you tell who the debtor is ?
Gwend Well, the top part has been ripped off where the names would have been, but there's a signature at the bottom - trouble is I can't make it out.
Simpson Oh let me have a bash, Gwenders.
Gwend Oh, very well, but I doubt you'll make it out either.
Simpson *[Looks at paper]* K.K. Leeding.
Marreau What ?
Gwend Really - are you sure ?
Simpson Yes, I studied graphology for a while - thought it might come in useful one day.
Gwend Sometimes you really surprise me, Simpson.
Marreau I think we should affront the professor with this information.
Gwend Confront, Marreau. We should confront him with the information.
Marreau That too.

[Angela appears at the door halfway through next line, unseen by others]

Gwend There are so many unconnected clues in this case, some of them must be misleading.
Angela You wanted me ?
Gwend No, why ?
Angela I was sure I just heard my name mentioned.
Marreau No. We *would* like a word with your father though, if you'd find him for us.
Gwend Actually Miss Leeding, I would like to ask you a few questions.
Angela Oh, alright. What do you want to know ?
Gwend Did you go on the Ramhaken expedition ?
Angela No, I stayed at home, I'm allergic to sand, so Egypt's out of the question.
Gwend Um. If these deaths aren't accidents - if they're murders - is there anyone who you'd suspect ?
Angela Well, I've never thought they were accidents - well not since the second one anyway, however [Pause]

Marreau Yes ? What is it ?
Angela Well the person I suspected has just been squashed.
Simpson Good grief, Spotty Palgrove - why did you suspect him ?
Angela Well, with him losing all his money the way he did

Marreau Wait just one moment ! He had lost all his money ?
Angela Oh yes, didn't you know ?
Gwend I knew there was something fishy about him.
Simpson But that's incredible, he was almost a millionaire. How did he come to lose it ?
Angela You name it, he tried it - the Stock Exchange, Cards, Horses - everything he tried lost him a fortune !

[Emily enters]

Emily Hello everyone.
Marreau Ah, my dear M'amoiselle Danvers, how are you ?
Emily A bit shaken actually - with Percy dying like that. [She goes over to Simpson and kisses him]
But you'll look after me won't you Simmy ?
Simpson Of course, Emmy-poos [He kisses her]
Gwend *Emmy-Poos* ! Stone me ! How can you stand it woman !
Emily I like Simmy calling me Emmy-poos.
Gwend I hope that bicarb arrives soon, I'm feeling sick !
Angela Emily - just what are you playing at ?
Emily Whatever do you mean Angela ?
Angela I thought you were having an affair with Mex.
Gwend [Furious] What !!!
Emily No that's all over.
Simpson I say, I'm not pinching old Mexi's girl am I. A fellow can't do a thing like that to a chap - especially not an old friend like Mexi !
Emily You didn't seem too worried about it last night.
Marreau *Sacre Bleu* !
Gwend Simpson, you didn't ! [Slight pause] Did you ?
Emily I was upset

Simpson She needed comforting

Gwend *Comforting* !
Angela So, you've discarded Mex, have you ?

Emily Yes, Simmy's much more exciting !
Simpson Am I ? Oh gosh - I can't believe that !
Gwend [*downbeat*] No, neither can I !

[Prof. Leeding enters]

Leeding Oh, excuse me a moment everybody. [*Pause, to Emily*] Emily I'd like your opinion on this [*shows her some artefact*] [*Pause*] Ramesees the fourth would you say ?
Emily No, the scalloped edges are wrong - and the clay shows signs of overburning; definitely Ptolemy the Great.
Leeding Thank-you Emily, I knew you'd know.
Gwend Hold on ! I thought you were the dizzy blonde who didn't know anything - and just went along for the ride - [*slight pause*] so to speak.
Leeding Good heavens - Miss Danvers is one of the foremost authorities on Egyptian artefacts in the world !
Emily It's my fault - I must apologize - my little joke - No-one ever thinks I'm very bright so I usually just play along.
Marreau This is most mischievous of you M'amoiselle, you should not go telling fibs, the little red cells they get confused.
Angela Yes Emily's brilliant at spotting old relics, aren't you dear - takes one to know one - that's what I always say !
Simpson Ha ha - I say that's rather witty.

[Emily hits Simpson]

Emily [*To Simpson*] So you think I'm an old relic do you ?
Simpson No - no - Oh crikey - I thought she was joking !
Emily If that's all you think of me I'm going back to Mexi [*Dashes O/S*]
Gwend Over my dead body [*Exits after her*]

Marreau Hmph.
Simpson I'm always doing things like that.
Angela Never mind Mr. Simpson, you're better off without her.
Marreau Professor ...
Leeding Yes Monsieur Marreau
Marreau I wonder if you can help explain this [*brandishes crumpled note*]
Leeding [*Changes glasses to read it*] Ah, yes.
Marreau Am I right in thinking that that is your signature ?
Leeding Indeed you are.
Marreau So would you kindly tell us why you were taking out a loan ?
Leeding You've got it all wrong; It was I who was lending the money not borrowing it.
Marreau Oh ? Would you mind ingratiating on this ?
Leeding I beg your pardon.
Marreau Ingratiate, ingratiate - do you not understand your own language ?
Leeding What does he mean, Mr. Simpson ?
Simpson Dashed if I know, pity Gwender's not here - she'd know.

Angela I think he means elaborate daddy ...

Leeding Ah I see - well I wouldn't normally discuss my or anyone else's business affairs - but as he's dead

Marreau Oh ?

Leeding Yes - I leant Palgrove a thousand pounds.

Marreau *Sacre Bleu* - and now he is dead you will not be paid back, *n'est-ce pas*.

Leeding Ironically enough, I'll probably be paid back sooner than I expected - it was secured against poor old Percy's life insurance policy.

[There is a female shriek offstage]

Marreau *Sacre Bleu* ! Not another !

[Blackout]

Act II Scene 2

Scene : The same - empty stage, Marreau enters and sits on sofa.
After a few seconds Emily enters, she has a black eye. She sits S/R.
After a few more seconds Gwendolyn enters, her right hand is bandaged,
she sits S/L. Gwend & Emily look daggers at each other.

There is an embarrassed silence.

[Pause]

Marreau Well
Gwend I wouldn't Marreau.

[Pause]

Marreau I think

Emily Don't.

[Simpson bounds into the room, goes towards Gwend unaware of Emily]

Simpson I say Gwenders, well done, I never thought you had it in you !
Emily How dare you !
Simpson Oh Gosh ! Sorry Emmy, didn't see you there.
Gwend I'm not proud of what I did.
Emily I should think not !
Gwend I don't normally hit people.
Emily But you made an exception in my case I suppose.
Gwend It was the heat of the moment.
Marreau It is so unlike you Gwendolyn.
Gwend Yes I know.
Emily If I'd known how you felt about Mexi, I wouldn't have
Gwend [*Upset*] I've ruined everything now.
Simpson Oh I don't know, I don't think Mexi's too bothered.
Emily Well he should be ...
Marreau Indeed, it is hardly fitting behaviour for a lady
Gwend Watch it Marreau !
Simpson Well it could have been worse.
Emily Oh yes ? How ?
Simpson Well when we heard the scream we all thought there'd been another murder.
Emily If Mexi hadn't pulled her off me there would have been !

{ There is the sound of scuffling and arguing offstage }

Marreau What on earth is going on out there ?

[Mrs. Williams enters dragging an unwilling Iris onstage]

Iris You've got no right dragging me in 'ere like this.
MrsW You be quiet Iris: there are some people here want to ask you some questions.
Iris I don't want to answer no questions.
Gwend Is this the girl who sold you the mushrooms, Mrs. Williams ?
MrsW This is her, she's the one. If anyone's been poisoning anyone, here's your culprit !
Iris Poisoning ! I ain't been poisoning anyone !
Gwend [*Walks towards Iris*] Alright Jimmy - the games up !
Iris What ? What do you mean Jimmy
Marreau Aha ! Once again that little Jimmy fellow !
Iris What are you talking about ?
Gwend Come on Jimmy, I've seen you in disguise enough times to recognise you.
Marreau Yes - you cannot expect to pull the cotton over our ears another time !
MrsW What on earth ?
Iris You're all raving barmy !
Emily Hear ! Hear !
Simpson Yes come on Jimmy, no point dragging it out - you've been discovered - so take it like a man and give yourself up.
Iris Like a man ? I'm a girl !
Gwend Are you going to pull that wig off or am I going to do it ?
Iris You touch my hair and I'll have the law onto you !
Emily I'll be a witness.
Gwend Emily unless you want a matching set of eyes, keep out of this will you ?
Emily Did you hear that - that's a threat that is !
Iris I heard it.
Simpson Shut up Jimmy !
Iris Stop calling me Jimmy !
MrsW Yes, stop calling her Jimmy.
Gwend O.K. O.K. Watch !

[Gwend marches the last few step to Iris] [She grabs hold of Iris's hair and pulls]

Iris Ow !!!!!
Emily You're mad !

[Gwend pulls harder]

Iris OWWWW !!!!!
MrsW Leave her alone - I didn't bring her in here to be assaulted.

[MrsW goes to stop Gwend, but Gwend has already realised her mistake]

Gwend Oh Dear ! I am sorry ! I thought you were ...
Emily You're a maniac you are !
Gwend No, no, I thought
Iris Yes you're a - you're a psychologist - a psychologist that's what you are.
Gwend [*Regaining her normal composure*] Psychopath I think you mean - and I assure you I am not.
Marreau What have you done Gwendolyn ?
Simpson She's pulled this girl's hair thinking she was little Jimmy in a wig !
Marreau I know that Simpson !

Simpson Then why did you ask ?
Marreau It was a rhetorical question.
Simpson [*Vaguely remembering*] Ah - We've had one of those before haven't we.
Emily If you want to sue, I'll be a witness !
MrsW Yes I saw it too - just coz. we're working class doesn't mean you can go round pulling our hair willy-nilly !
Emily Oh don't worry - it's not because you're working class - it seems she does that to everyone.
Gwend Oh hell - I knew I should have gone to the seaside today !

[**Mexi enters**]

Mexi What's been going on ? Not been in another fight have you Gwendolyn ?
Gwend Oh Mexi ! Whatever can you think of me ?
Mexi I think you're the most interesting broad I've ever come across !
Emily *What !!!*
Gwend Interesting ?
Mexi Fascinating !
Gwend Fascinating ?
Mexi Charming !
Gwend Charming ?
Emily Oh for Heaven's sake - he fancies you Gwendolyn - cut the adjectives !
Gwend Do you ?
Mexi Do I what ?
Gwend Do you fancy me ?
Mexi Well let me put it another way [*Pause*] I love you !
Gwend {*Gasp*} What ?
Mexi Do you want me to say it again ?
Gwend Yes please.
Mexi I love you.
Gwend I love you too Mexi.
Emily [*Sarcastic, bitter*] How sweet ! [**With a glower at Gwend she marches out of the room**]

Iris She's a psychologist - you don't want to go falling in love with her.
Gwend [*Dreamily*] Get it right dear, it's psychopath - not psychologist.
Mexi What ?
Gwend [*Still dreamily*] She thinks I'm I psychopath.
Mexi Why ?
Gwend Coz. I pulled her hair.
Mexi Why ?
Gwend Because I thought she was little Jimmy.
Mexi Who ?
Gwend Little Jimmy.
Mexi But she's a girl !
Simpson No she isn't, Little Jimmy's a boy.
Mexi I realise that little Jimmy's a boy - but this girl here is a girl - [*slight pause*] - definitely - [*slight pause*]- I can tell these things !
Marreau Yes quite, but little Jimmy is also sometimes a girl, *Comprend ?*
Mexi Non ! I mean 'No' - how can little Jimmy sometimes be a girl - either he's a boy or he's a girl - I mean she's a girl - [*Slight pause*] I think.

Marreau Precisely !
Mexi What ?
Marreau He's a boy and she's a girl - simple !
Mexi I give up !
Gwend [*Softly to Mexi*] I'll explain it to you later, [*tiny pause*] darling.
Mexi [*looks at her*] [*Pause*] Gwendolyn [*Slight pause*] Will you ... [*Pause*]
Gwend [*waits*] Will I what, Mexi ?
Mexi Urm - will you come and see me later Gwendolyn, I have something I want to say to you - alone.
Gwend [*Falteringly*] Yes - yes of course.

[*Mexi exits*]

Iris Are you going to ask me some questions or have I just come here to have my arm twisted round my back by a cook and my hair pulled by a psycho - a psycho-whatever-it-is.
Marreau Indeed we ought to question her Gwendolyn.
Iris I don't want to be asked questions by her, she'll probably get the thumb-screws out next.
Simpson You've got it all wrong - Gwendy's ever-so-nice really !
Gwend For once Simpson, I'll let you off for calling me Gwendy - but don't make a habit of it.
MrsW Are you going to ask her about the mushrooms ?
Marreau Indeed. Where did you get the mushrooms from that you gave to Mrs. Williams, Iris ?
Iris I picked 'em in the woods - Old Joe helped me find them.
Marreau Ah yes, Old Joe, he is what you call a trump - yes ?
Gwend Tramp actually Marreau.
Marreau Just so.
MrsW He's well known in the area is Old Joe - often makes a few bob doing odd jobs and so on.
Marreau Who is this Bob ?
MrsW What ?
Marreau This Bob you refer to - he is a friend of Old Joe ?

[*Baffled expressions except Gwend*]

Gwend No Marreau - he makes a few bob - it means a bit of money - a bob is a shilling.
Marreau A bob is a shilling ? You really do have a very strange language.
Gwend Iris - do you know Old Joe well ?
Iris Are you going to pull my hair again ?
Gwend No, I'm sorry about that it was a misunderstanding. Would you answer my question please.
Iris I s'pose so. I've seen him about a few times but I'd never talked to him before.
Gwend So why did you talk to him this time ?
Iris He comes up to me 'e did, and says how there's some lovely mushrooms over by the beech trees.
Marreau And it was these mushrooms you picked and sold to Mrs. Williams.
Iris Yes that's right.
MrsW Poison they were you silly girl. Killed poor Mr. Victor.
Iris I didn't know - ev'ryone said as how Old Joe knew what you can and can't eat in the countryside. [*She suddenly bursts into tears*] I never meant to hurt anyone - honest.
Gwend Alright calm down Iris, I'm sure it was an accident. - Look after her will you Mrs. Williams.
MrsW Yes - come with me, it's not the end of the world.
Simpson [*Lightly*] It was for poor old Victor.
[*Exit Iris & MrsW*]

Marreau This is most intriguing - it seems as if Old Bob was responsible.

Gwend I presume you mean Old Joe - why on earth would a tramp want to kill Victor - there's something wrong somewhere, especially as the fact that he'd selected the mushrooms would soon come to light.

Marreau Indeed.

Simpson This is probably a stupid idea, but perhaps someone switched the mushrooms while they were in the kitchen, before Mrs. Williams made the omelette.

Gwend Very good Simpson - that's certainly a possibility.

Simpson You mean it wasn't a silly comment ?

Marreau Not at all - well done Simpson.

Simpson Gosh ! I'll be solving the case for you next Marreau !

Gwend Oh you're after my job are you Simpson !

Marreau I have told you before about casting these nasturtiums, Gwendolyn !

Gwend Aspersions, Marreau. If I were to cast nasturtiums all we'd end up with is an interesting floral display.

Simpson I like interesting floral displays - they're [pause] interesting.

Marreau I feel we may be straying from the subject.

Gwend Quite right Marreau. I wonder where we might find Old Joe, I think it would be enlightening to have a word with him.

Simpson I saw him outside not long ago - he was out by the woods.

Gwend Would you go and see if you can find him, Simpson.

Simpson Oh yes, O.K. [Exits]

Gwend This is a strange old case, Marreau - we don't seem to be getting anywhere.

Marreau I am not so sure Gwendolyn - I have a how you say - a tinkling.

Gwend Do you really Marreau - I'd be happier if you had an inkling.

Marreau Ah yes.

Gwend Well, are you going to share this theory with me, Marreau.

Marreau Not just yet Gwendolyn, I would like to test my apotheosis first.

Gwend Hypothesis, Marreau - I'd give up on big words if I were you.

[Randolph & Zeta Quest enter]

R.Quest What's old Simpson up to ? He's charging about the garden like a squirrel who's lost his nuts.

Gwend One of the best descriptions of Simpson I have ever heard.

Marreau He is looking for Old Joe.

Zeta Oh, he's that smelly old vagrant isn't he.

Marreau Well I cannot vouch for his smelliness but ...

R.Quest Funnily enough I have my suspicions about him.

Gwend Oh ? What sort of suspicions ?

R.Quest Well I saw him talking to Percy Palgrove not long before he got himself squashed, and I thought they were arguing.

Zeta Why on earth would Percy be talking to a tramp ?

Marreau Why indeed ?

Zeta It's funny the way they treat that dirty old man - I saw Angela talking to him in what seemed to me a far-too-friendly manner for someone of his class.

Gwend When was this Zeta ?

Zeta Oh, only an hour or so ago.

Marreau Since Monsieur Palgrove's fatal accident then ?

Zeta Oh yes, some time after.

R.Quest There's something you may not know that perhaps you ought to ...
Zeta Do you really think they need to know, Randolph.
Marreau If there is anything that may help me solve this case you must not keep it from me.
R.Quest No indeed, well - Percy and Angela used to be engaged, but when Percy's recklessness led to his bankruptcy the engagement was broken off and they've hardly spoken to each other since by all accounts.

[Simpson re-enters, out-of-breath]

Simpson I've found him !
Marreau Well done Simpson, show him in.
Simpson Righty-ho [Exits]
Zeta You're not bringing that smelly old man in here are you ?
Marreau I need to question him.
Zeta In that case, if you'll excuse us, come along Randolph.
[R.Quest & Zeta exit]

Gwend What are you hoping to find out from Old Joe then Marreau ?
Marreau I believe he holds the key to this mystery !
Gwend Well you're way ahead of me this time, Hemlock.
Marreau Aren't I always ?.
Gwend Hmph !!!
[Simpson re-enters with Old Joe] [Old Joe speaks with a gruff voice]

Old Joe What are you wanting me for ? I don't like being inside houses, I like to be in the open air, with the wind whistling round me and the birds swooping around me 'ead. It's not natural bein' inside houses.
Marreau Um, you obviously do not like getting too near water either !
Old Joe What-do-ya-mean ?
Simpson Steady-on Marreau, no need to insult the chap, just 'coz he pongs a bit.
Marreau What sort of mushrooms did you help Iris gather ?
Old Joe Oh, those, they were Blewitts, lovely they are. Why do you ask ?
Marreau Are you sure they weren't Night Cap !
Old Joe Night Cap ?
Gwend Death Cap.
Old Joe Of course they weren't Death Cap - d'you think I'd still be alive if I didn't know the difference between Blewitts and Death Cap.
Gwend So you are certain that the fungi you picked were perfectly edible.
Old Joe No doubt about it.

[Inspector Jones enters]

I/Jones Ah hello everybody.
Marreau Inspector Jones, do you have some news for us ?
I/Jones Yes I wonder if you'd be good enough to get everybody together.
Marreau Why is this Inspector ?
I/Jones Well I've solved the case haven't I !
Marreau *What !!!*

[Blackout]

Act II Scene 3

Scene: The same.

The entire (surviving) cast {Including Iris, Protheroe & Old Joe, but not Farmer} is assembled.

Inspector Jones, loving every minute of it, is about to hold court.

Marreau is distinctly unhappy. Simpson is completely mystified as to what is going on.

Everyone is avoiding Old Joe for obvious reasons.

Gwendolyn is standing next to Mexi they look fondly at each other.

I/Jones Well then, here we are isn't it. The case of the Curse of Cardiff. A mystery that's baffled the best detective minds in the world and I've gone and solved it look you.

Marreau I will have you know that I have also discovered the truth.

I/Jones Don't take it too badly Mr. Marreau, a good amateur like you cannot expect to rival the might of the Welsh Constabulary.

Marreau *Amateur ?!*

Gwend Calm down, Hemlock.

I/Jones I'd had my suspicions for a couple of years, but what clinched it for me was the report on the poisons used to kill Mr. Dalglish.

Marreau This is not fair, I have not seen this report.

Protheroe It's still got to be confirmed Marreau, but there's little doubt.

I/Jones As the good doctor says there is little doubt that whoever made up the cocktail of hallucinogenic and toxic poisons knew exactly what they were doing.

R. Quest Well come on then man spit it out - who is responsible.

I/Jones There were only three people with that depth of knowledge, Mr. Palgrove who is no longer with us and died in very peculiar circumstances, Doctor Protheroe who was nowhere near when the murder took place and ... Mr Smith.

Gwend Mexi ! No ! It can't be you !

Mexi Of course it's not me Gwendolyn - the man's an idiot.

I/Jones Do you deny, Mr. Smith that you studied pharmacy at Yale ?

Mexi No, I don't deny it, nor do I deny that I have the knowledge to make up a pretty fiendish poison - but I simply didn't do it, what possible motive could I have ?

I/Jones The cat collection of course.

Simpson I think you're barking up the wrong tree there Inspector; Mexi's got money coming out of his ears, haven't you Mexi !

Mexi Well my father does own a shipping line so I'm not exactly short of cash !

Marreau You do not seem to have done your research very well, Inspector.

I/Jones Well - tell me then - who else could have done it.

Marreau Anyone who bothered to study the poisons present in fungi and other plants, - such as Deadly Lampshade that I think you'll find was also used.

Protheroe Good grief - of course - Belladonna - the rapid heart beat, and speed of death - why didn't I think of that.

I/Jones So who do you think did it then Marreau ?

Marreau If you would be good enough Inspector [*He shoos I/Jones out of the way.*]
I do not think I know. I know for certain.

[Marreau is now in his element and very ebullient]

Marreau This was one of the most complex cases I have ever had to deal with, but certain things drew me to the answer.

Simpson Gosh Marreau, you're a genius.

Marreau I know.

R. Quest Come on then Marreau, you've got us on the edge of our seats.

[Seated cast edge forward]

Marreau Whoever it was who planned these murders had a brilliant mind, however he had not reckoned on the mind of Hemlock Marreau. Firstly, what was the motive - money. The inheritance of the cat collection. Secondly who needed money that desperately. Third, who was ingenious enough to plan these intricate and theatrical murders. Fifth

Simpson Fourth, Marreau !

Marreau Oh yes, fourth, how did they expect to get away with nine murders ?

I/Jones Well everyone thought it was the curse, that's how !

Marreau Precisely - and who wrote the curse ?

I/Jones Well, some old Pharaoh or other.

Marreau That is where you are wrong, and this is the most ingenious part of the entire charade.

Gwend I'm fascinated Marreau, whatever do you mean.

Marreau There is no curse.

All: What ?

Marreau The curse was invented by the same person who came up with the idea of a tontine whereby the last member of the team to stay alive inherited all the cats !

Gwend Hold on Marreau - the tontine and the translation were drawn up by Percy Palgrove.

Marreau Just so my dear. Percy Palgrove is the murderer.

Gwend But he's dead Marreau !

I/Jones [Laughing] Ha - you say I don't do *my* research properly.

Leeding Yes but no-one's died since he got squashed, have they - so the boulder falling on him really was an accident !

Marreau No ! The boulder incident was definitely murder.

[Supt. Farmer enters stands next to Old Joe]

Farmer Thanks for the phone call Monsieur Marreau, I got over 'ere as quick as I could.

[Farmer sniffs Old Joe, isn't bothered and does not move]

Marreau I am glad to see you superintendent, did you check what I asked ?

Farmer I did sir, and very interesting it was too.

R. Quest So someone else has murdered the murderer.

Marreau No.

Leeding Come-on Marreau you're not making sense now.

Marreau Percy Palgrove is not dead !

All: What !!!

I/Jones Oh he's dead alright I had to scrape him off the floor.

Farmer By 'eck Jonesy, Monsieur Marreau here's gone and done it again 'asn't 'e !

I/Jones What has he done sir ?

Farmer Gone and solved our case for us.

I/Jones But he thinks Mr. Palgrove is still alive isn't it.

Farmer Aye, well I'm thinking he's probably right there !

All: *What !!!*

Marreau Am I right in thinking that the remains of the body found under the boulder had no teeth superintendent ?

Farmer Aye, that be right, well none to speak of.

Marreau May I suggest Inspector that you arrest that man [*Points to tramp*]

I/Jones What ? Old Joe - why would he want to murder these people.

Marreau I'm afraid that it was Old Joe and not Monsieur Palgrove who was squashed under the boulder. That tramp there is none other than Percy Palgrove !
[*Old Joe comes forward, taking off disguise*]

Palgrove Damn you Marreau ! I'd've got away with it if it wasn't for you.

Marreau That's not quite all is it, Palgrove. What about your accomplice.

Palgrove What accomplice ? I did all the murders, I admit it.

Marreau Tell me how did you drown Napier-Smith in the toilet, I must say that one baffles me.

Palgrove Oh that was simple, I bashed him over the head with a brick then held his head under the water till he drowned.

Marreau As you say simple. And the pea ? How did you manage to make Bletherington choke on a pea ?

Palgrove No, I didn't do that - that was a genuine accident - but it was that which gave me the idea for the curse - and the tontine.

Leeding That's fiendish, Palgrove !

Palgrove No the clever one was the fungi, I had to time it just right so that he didn't die before the appointed time.

Marreau And you masqueraded as Old Joe in order to get the poisonous fungi.

Palgrove No, you're wrong there, the mushrooms Iris brought were perfectly edible, I hadn't realised Old Joe had helped her pick them, so I thought she'd be suspected of having made a simple mistake. I added Death Cap, Fly Agaric and Deadly Nightshade to the omelette when Mrs. Williams wasn't looking.

MrsW You horrible man ! But you never came in the kitchen that evening.

Palgrove I - er - crept in while you weren't looking.

MrsW You couldn't have done; those mushrooms were in my view all the time - except when Angela came down to see how dinner was getting on.

Palgrove Be quiet you stupid woman !

MrsW [*Offended*] Oh I say.

Angela It's no good darling ! If they hang you my life's not worth living anyway.

Palgrove Be quiet Angela.

Marreau So as I suspected you did indeed have an accomplice; Inspector arrest that woman.

I/Jones Yes sir.

Leeding Angela ! Why ? Why on earth ?

Angela It's your fault father. You wouldn't let me marry Percy because he was penniless - We had to get him some money from somewhere.

Leeding But killing the whole team, Angela !

Angela I don't care about the damned team ! I only care about Percy !

Gwend Angela, why did you tell us that you'd always suspected Percy of the murders then ?

Angela Percy was officially dead by then - I thought it would throw you off the scent.

Marreau But you had not reckoned on the nose of Hemlock Marreau !

Palgrove [*Produces grenade*] Alright ! Let Angela go or I'll blow us all to smithereens !

Marreau If I am not mistaken, that is a Vickers type 27 hand grenade, is it not ?

Palgrove Quite right Marreau, and I'm sure you're familiar with its capabilities

Marreau Indeed, a primary Mercuric Fulminate detonator linked to a series of

Palgrove Yes, yes, well suffice it to say that if it goes off there won't be any survivors

Farmer Now don't you go doing nothing silly, Mr. Palgrove.

Palgrove *Silly ! Silly !!* We're going to the gallows anyway ! I might as well take you lot with us !
[Palgrove removes the pin]

R.Quest I say - that's not very sporting !

Simpson That's a 27A isn't it, Palgrove ?

Palgrove [Looks at grenade to see type number] What if it is ?

Simpson The 27A was withdrawn due to a faulty firing mechanism -

Marreau No, Simpson, it looks like the far more reliable 27B to me !

Simpson I don't think so

Palgrove Do you want to take the chance ?

Simpson I think I will ! [Lunges at Palgrove] [Farmer & Simpson wrestle with Palgrove]

Palgrove You fools !!!

[Simpson grabs the grenade & hurls it offstage] [The cast duck except Simpson]
[There is an enormous explosion] [Lighting & F.X. as desired] [After it has died down, cast rise]

Simpson [Brushing himself off] You were right, Marreau - it was the 'B' !

[Blackout - Curtain]

Marreau returns in "*Marreau and the Bloody Carpet*"