

Bunny
Phillipa
Miss Blacklock
Mrs Swettenham
Patrick
Mitzi
Edmund
Scherz

(BUNNY interrupts before JULIA can finish.)

BUNNY. I once read a book called that.

PHILLIPA. Are you sure, Bunny?

BUNNY. No. No, that wasn't it. Let me see. It was called -
Death Wore Black Lingerie.

(They all look at her in amazement. She looks up at them smiling benignly.)

(After a moment of thought.) No, no. I'm wrong. *Death Wore a Bra and Panties.* That's it. Definitely. Nice book - though there were some parts that I didn't quite understand. *(She beams at them.)*

(The Main Doors open and MISS BLACKLOCK enters.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. There is something you can do for me, Patrick.

PATRICK. Anything.

MISS BLACKLOCK. *(going to the drinks)* There's not much sherry. *(She picks up a bottle.)* Put this away and get a new one please.

(PATRICK looks at the bottle, puzzled.)

PATRICK. There's more than half a bottle.

MISS BLACKLOCK. It's been open a long time...

(She hands the bottle to him. He takes the bottle and looks at it, even more puzzled.)

PATRICK. But... *(He checks himself and goes to the door.)*

(As PATRICK reaches the Main Door it opens and MITZI enters. She stands there like an usher about to make an announcement.)

MITZI. *(trying to be dignified)* Here are Mrs. Swettenham and her son Edmund Swettenham. Thank you. You're welcome.

(JULIA has to turn her back. PHILLIPA just manages to keep a straight face. PATRICK laughs. MITZI is furious.)

Why you laugh at me?

PATRICK. *(controlling himself)* It wasn't you – it was something else – honest.

MITZI. You – you keep out of my kitchen!

MISS BLACKLOCK. Mitzi!

(MITZI turns, and almost knocks the SWETTENHAMS flying as she exits.)

MITZI. This way, please.

(MITZI exits. MRS. SWETTENHAM and EDMUND enter. She is a woman in her late fifties. He is twenty-six or twenty-seven, a serious young man with pretensions of being a writer. He has not had anything published yet. He is dark and somewhat foreign-looking, although he is, in fact, very English.)

(MISS BLACKLOCK. moves up to greet them.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. Clara. Edmund. How nice of you to call.

MRS. SWETTENHAM. *(awkwardly)* We were – just passing – Letty...

MISS BLACKLOCK. Really?

MRS. SWETTENHAM. That's right – isn't it, Edmund?

(She turns to EDMUND for support, but clearly his heart is not in it.)

EDMUND. Yes, Mother – that's right.

(PATRICK exits through the Main Door.)

MRS. SWETTENHAM. We were in the car and I said to Edmund – who drives much too fast, you know – “Oh, look, Edmund. We're passing Little Paddocks. Letty would never forgive us if we didn't drop in and say hello.” And Edmund said... *(She turns to him again.)* What was it you said?

(He swallows hard. Clearly, he is embarrassed.)

EDMUND. “What a good idea.”

MRS. SWETTENHAM. And I said – “Yes, isn’t it.” So, here we are.

MISS BLACKLOCK. Well, it was very nice of you to think of us. Do sit down. (*To BUNNY.*) Isn’t it, Bunny?

BUNNY. What is, Letty?

MISS BLACKLOCK. Clara and Edmund were just passing and decided to drop in and see how we were.

BUNNY. Oh, but this morning you said they’d be bound to call in – bursting with curiosity you said – after seeing the announcement in the *Gazette*. You did see it, didn’t you, Clara?

(If the ground could open up and swallow all of them, it would be merciful.)

MRS. SWETTENHAM. Well, I er – that is – was it the one...

BUNNY. Right at the bottom of the Personal Column...

(PATRICK enters with a bottle of sherry.)

MRS. SWETTENHAM. Oh, yes. I may have noticed it... *(She gives a nervous little laugh.)*

BUNNY. Julia said you’d be here, too. Wild horses, wouldn’t keep you away...

(MRS. SWETTENHAM and JULIA smile sweetly at each other. MISS BLACKLOCK attempts to ease the embarrassment.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. Well, anyway – now that you are here...

PATRICK. *(picking up)* Totally unexpected.

MISS BLACKLOCK. *(glaring at him)* Patrick! Er – let’s all have a drink.

PATRICK. Um?

MISS BLACKLOCK. *Drinks.*

PATRICK. *(waking up)* Yes, of course. Sherry, Mrs. Swettenham?

(MISS BLACKLOCK leads MRS. SWETTENHAM and EDMUND across to the bay window.)

MRS. SWETTENHAM. (*still a little put out*) Well, um – yes, that will be fine, thank you.

PATRICK. Edmund?

EDMUND. Thank you.

(PATRICK busies himself at the sideboard getting drinks for everyone. EDMUND, still embarrassed, turns his attention to PHILLIPA.)

Well, Phillipa. You looked very busy this morning.

PHILLIPA. Things got even more hectic after you left.

JULIA. (*seizing on it*) I see. You two have been having *secret* meetings, eh? *Hatching* something?

PHILLIPA. (*seething*) There was nothing *secret* about it and we're not hatching anything.

EDMUND. (*still embarrassed*) No, no. By no means. You see, I had to call at Dayas Hall with some honey for Mrs. Lucas.

JULIA. That's *your story*.

PHILLIPA. Julia...

JULIA. Yes, darling?

PHILLIPA. I should be careful. Otherwise a few things might come out that the rest of us would consider most peculiar...

(PATRICK steps in fast with the drinks to stop a storm blowing up.)

PATRICK. Drinks, everyone!

(PATRICK hands MRS. SWETTENHAM and EDMUND their drinks; then MISS BLACKLOCK and BUNNY. He hands a glass each to JULIA and PHILLIPA.)

Cheers!

(They take their drinks, still angry with one another and are about to drink.)

I've laced yours with a dash of cyanide!

(This stops them in mid-action, but PATRICK raises his glass to them and to the others. The others return his greeting but the two girls are still a bit dubious. Then JULIA decides to take the plunge.)

JULIA. Oh, well – you can only die once. Cheers!

(JULIA drinks and PHILLIPA follows her example. JULIA indicates to them to move back to the main part of the drawing-room. While they are taking up various positions in the room, MISS BLACKLOCK crosses to the cigarette-box on the small table. PATRICK remains near the drinks. BUNNY goes to her chair, which is positioned so that she is in the best possible place to see MISS BLACKLOCK. PHILLIPA and EDMUND move so that they are in a direct line with the Main Door. MISS BLACKLOCK crosses to PHILLIPA with the cigarette-box. PHILLIPA takes one and EDMUND lights it for her with a match.)

BUNNY. Letty?

MISS BLACKLOCK. Yes?

BUNNY. When is this murder going to take place?

MRS. SWETTENHAM. Six-thirty... *(She realizes she has jumped in too quickly for someone who was “just passing” and not too concerned.)*

BUNNY. *(to MRS. SWETTENHAM)* Are you the murderer?

(MRS. SWETTENHAM is startled by BUNNY’s directness – so is everyone else.)

MRS. SWETTENHAM. Me? Of course I’m not?

BUNNY. Well, you seem to know all about it.

MRS. SWETTENHAM. *(flustered)* Well, er – it was in the Gazette – wasn’t it?

MISS BLACKLOCK. *(helping out)* I wouldn’t be surprised if everyone in Chipping Cleghorn saw it this morning.

MRS. SWETTENHAM. *(thankfully)* Yes – yes, indeed...

(MISS BLACKLOCK indicates the clock.)

MISS BLACKLOCK. It's nearly six-thirty, and if it's going to happen at all it'll be any moment now. Cigarette, anyone?

MRS. SWETTENHAM. No, thank you.

PHILLIPA. Yes please, Letty.

(MISS BLACKLOCK crosses to PHILLIPA and offers a cigarette to PHILLIPA who takes one. EDMUND lights it for her.)

Thank you, Edmund.

(The clock starts to chime the half-hour. All eyes turn to look at it. Everybody freezes; transfixed by the clock. We can almost feel the tension. As the last chime rings out, the lights go out leaving the room in total darkness.)

(We hear BUNNY gasp – almost a scream. One or two voices speak out: “What’s happening?,” “Who’s put the lights out?” “Come on – you’ve had your joke. Put them back on,” “For goodness sake, stop playing around. It’s not funny anymore,” and so on.)

(Then the Main Door bursts open with a crash, and a powerful flashlight plays round the room. The man holding the flashlight is RUDI SCHERZ – a young Swiss national.)

SCHERZ. (barking) Get your hands up! Stay where you are!

(The flashlight lands on JULIA... Her hands are still by her side – she is very cool.)

(More angrily.) I said: Get your hands up! If you want to get out of this alive do as you’re told.

(His tone of voice is such that JULIA obeys instantly. The flashlight moves on to MRS. SWETTENHAM who gives a startled gasp, but

whose hands would touch the ceiling if she could make them do so. The light now swings on to EDMUND – but he has made only a halfhearted attempt to obey the order.)

You! High! High above your head!

(The menace in this man's voice leaves no doubt in EDMUND's mind. His hands shoot up. BUNNY is shaking with fear and is out of her chair and standing on tip-toe in an effort to do as she is told. The light swings from her and lands on PATRICK who, for once, is behaving himself.)

You, away from the door. Go.

(The light stays on PATRICK briefly and then moves on to just about where MISS BLACKLOCK is standing.)

Now!

(At this point, we hear firstly two shots fired – then a tiny pause – followed by a third shot. There are several screams, then, the flashlight falls to the ground and spins round before going out, and at the same time we hear a heavy thud. Then there is silence, held for a moment until JULIA breaks it.)

JULIA. For God's sake. Someone put the lights on!

MRS. SWETTENHAM. Has he gone?

PHILLIPA. I can't see – have you got those matches Edmund?

(EDMUND searches for a moment.)

EDMUND. Blast! That was the last one.

MRS. SWETTENHAM. Someone put the lights on...

PATRICK. They must be fused.

EDMUND. Where's the fuse-box?

PATRICK. In the hall – I'll go.

(We hear PATRICK cross the room and stumble.)

What the hell?

JULIA. What is it?

PATRICK. Stay calm. I'll soon have the lights back on.

(PATRICK exits through the Main Door.)

BUNNY. *(tremulously)* Letty... *(She waits for a moment or two – there is no reply.)* Letty...?

MISS BLACKLOCK. It's all right, Bunny – stay calm.

BUNNY. I'm frightened...

MISS BLACKLOCK. *(strained)* There's no need...

(A moment, and then the Lights come on.)

EDMUND. He's unconscious. Must have knocked himself out.

(PATRICK enters.)

PATRICK. Who is it?

EDMUND. I've no idea. Better get his gun – before he comes round.

PATRICK. Yes... *(He spots the gun by RUDI SCHERZ, and is about to pick it up but checks himself. He takes a handkerchief from his pocket and picks the gun up by the barrel.)*

MISS BLACKLOCK. Will someone please help me.

(All eyes turn to MISS BLACKLOCK and ignore the body of RUDI SCHERZ on the floor. MISS BLACKLOCK has blood all down the side of her face and all over her white blouse. It is a very dramatic sight so it is easy for them all to ignore SCHERZ for the moment.)

BUNNY. *(horrified)* Letty...

(Everyone moves to her as she sways unsteadily on her feet. They crowd round her, firing questions: "Is she badly hurt?" "It looks terrible," "Someone get her a brandy," and so on.)

PHILLIPA. Brandy? We'd better call a doctor.

MISS BLACKLOCK. No! I shall be all right...