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The Anastasia File

A Play

Royce Ryton

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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THE ANASTASIA FILE

First performed under the title *I Am Who I Am* at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge, on 15th August, 1978, with the following cast of characters:

Inspector	Laurence Payne
Men	Roger Hume
Mrs Manahan	Beth Ellis
Women	Judy Wilson

The play directed by Joan Kemp-Welch
Designed by Tanya McCallin

Subsequently performed under the title *The Anastasia File* at the Derby Playhouse, in association with North Bank Productions, on 5th February, 1986, with the following cast of characters:

Mrs Manahan	Angela Down
Inspector	William Marlowe
Actor	Colin Bennett
Actress	Judy Wilson

The play directed by Chris Hayes
Designed by Belinda Ackermann

PRODUCTION NOTES

SETTINGS

The stage is set as simply as possible, a couple of chairs, a table, a coat stand. That is all that is needed, for the stage represents a variety of places—a hospital, an office, various private drawing-rooms.

CASTING

The Inspector and Mrs Manahan are themselves throughout the play, but the Actor and Actress play a variety of parts, nurses, friends, secretaries, doctors, patients. The coat stand is used for them to hang a variety of coats, hats and other props which they use and put on when they change characters. It is also important that when they change characters, there is always a slight difference in their appearance and clothes and in their voices.

ACT I

The Inspector's office

The Inspector is seated at his desk working. He is a man of about forty. He is very pleasant and efficient and kind

The Actor comes in as a police officer

Actor Mrs Manahan is here, sir.

Inspector Oh yes. Show her in.

The Actor exits

The Inspector rises. He seems a little nervous. He places a chair c stage and waits

Mrs Manahan comes in. No longer young, she has a certain indefinable presence

Mrs Manahan.

She stands and looks at him silently

Would you care to sit down?

She sits

Well, you see . . .

Mrs Manahan I would know you anywhere, young man. You are very like your father.

Inspector So my mother always told me. He had a moustache, of course.

Mrs Manahan He is dead?

Inspector Oh yes. Before the war. My mother died recently too and I have been going through all her papers—which of course included his things as well and I discovered his notes on you.

Mrs Manahan And you want to ask me a whole lot of questions? And I have never met anyone who did not want to ask me questions. They write books and newspaper articles. They defend me. They attack me. It seems to me that the world is consumed with curiosity about me and will remain so for the rest of time. And I will tell you why. They do not want the answer. They want the mystery. They want to say to each other “I wonder what the truth is” far more than they want the truth. Romantics believe me, cynics still doubt me, but I have ceased to care. I came to see you for two reasons.

Inspector And what are they?

Mrs Manahan Because your father was very kind to me all those years ago,

and to ask you to leave me alone. I am old, Inspector, and tired, Inspector—besides I have said all there is to say years ago. I am married again and have a legal name no one can challenge. I have even found a little happiness in a new life. Please Inspector, leave me alone.

Inspector My father said you always told the truth—he searched for the truth and so do I, that's why we both became policemen. Yours is an unsolved case. He wanted to solve it. It became an obsession with him. I have inherited that obsession, and I tell you something, you wanted it solved too, otherwise you wouldn't be here. That's why you always see people in the end. Somewhere deep inside you there's a hope that the key to the mystery will be unearthed.

Mrs Manahan (*rising*) No, you are quite wrong. Because you see, to me there is no mystery. I know the answer.

Inspector There have been many books about you, I'm thinking of writing a book, no—not about you, it'll be quite different—in nineteen-fourteen Germany invaded Belgium—and France and England were swept by stories of German atrocities in Belgium. After the war a court of inquiry was held, not one atrocity could be authenticated. Not one. I've often thought of publishing a book called, "The atrocities that never were".

Mrs Manahan comes back, puts her coat on the coat stand and sits again

Mrs Manahan And you think my life is a mystery that never was . . . very well then, what is it you want to know?

Black-out

The Lights go up again at once

The Inspector and Mrs Manahan are not there, but the Actor and Actress are. The Actor is seated. The Actress standing. They wear white coats

Actor as Doctor A Nurse, hand me that police file, will you?

Actress as Nurse A Which one, Doctor?

Actor The attempted suicide.

Actress We have four . . . The Baron von . . .

Actor No no. The girl.

Actress The one found in the canal?

Actor That's it. What's her name?

Actress We don't know.

Actor Hasn't she spoken?

Actress Not once. Vague indistinct murmurings, that's all.

Actor No papers on her?

Actress I don't think so.

Actor (*glancing at the file*) When was she found?

Actress The twenty-seventh of February.

Actor A week ago. Ah! What do the police say? (*He reads the report*)

Unknown girl's attempted suicide. Yesterday evening on the twenty-seventh of February nineteen-twenty at nine p.m. a girl of about twenty jumped off the Bendler Bridge into the Canal with the intention of taking her life. She was saved by a police sergeant and admitted to the Elisabeth

Hospital . . . etc. etc . . . no papers on her . . . and so forth—she refused to make any statements. Well, I'd better go and look at her.

The Actress exits and wheels in Mrs Manahan in a hospital bed. She is staring vacantly ahead of her, presumably comprehending nothing

Actress She doesn't speak at all, Doctor.

Actor Where's her temperature chart, Nurse?

Actress Here, Doctor.

Actor One doesn't know how much she understands. What is your name?

We don't want to hurt you, what is your name?

Actress She understands German. I'm sure of it. When we tell her to wash or get out of bed for us to make it, she does so.

Actor Does she talk in her sleep?

Actress She calls out. I can't make out the words.

Actor Do you have any relatives? Do you know anyone in Berlin? What is she doing?

Actress She always hides like that if one talks to her for long.

Actor I suppose she's not pretending.

Actress I certainly don't think so.

Actor And yet . . . I don't know—of course I'm not a specialist in mental cases, but I don't think she's mad. She'd better go to the Dalldorf Asylum. Arrange the transfer, will you?

The Actor crosses to the desk and sits. He presses a bell then calls out "Next Please"

The Actress helps Mrs Manahan out of bed and crosses with her to the desk

Where is she from?

Actress as Nurse B The Elisabeth Hospital, sir.

Actor as Doctor B What's her name?

Actress They don't know.

Actor Don't know?

Actress She was found in a canal by the police. Apparently she had no identification papers and she won't speak.

Actor They've made inquiries and advertised, I suppose?

Actress Oh yes. No one has come forward.

Actor We live in very strange times. (*He gets up and crosses to Mrs Manahan*) I suppose she did jump. She wasn't pushed.

Actress I think it's most unlikely. She'd have said if she was pushed.

Actor (*slowly and carefully*) How old are you?

Silence

What is your name?

Silence

Actress Why don't you speak, dear? We won't hurt you or be in any way unkind. We want to help you.

The Actor starts a medical examination. He looks into her eyes, into her mouth, at her ears. He lifts her arms and lets them drop

Actor It's difficult to estimate her age, she's dreadfully thin. (*He moves to take her wrist*)

Mrs Manahan shrinks in terror

Actress The Elisabeth Hospital said she often did that. It's as if she's trying to ward off blows.

Actor I won't hurt you.

Mrs Manahan sits. The Actor looks at her head, folding back the hair

Actor She's been in some form of street fighting. She's been hit in the head.

Actress She's been stabbed too, some time ago. There are stab wounds on the right side. She holds out the right arm with ease, the left with difficulty.

Actor Stand her up.

Mrs Manahan stands

So you understand me? Hold out your arms. Can't you straighten it?

Mrs Manahan calls out with pain

You'd better put her to bed.

The Actress leads her back to the bed. The Actor looks puzzled and watches her all the time. The Actress returns

Actor The arm may be tubercular. Arrange for tests to be taken.

Actress Yes doctor.

Actor Well, I don't know. I don't believe the patient is mad as such. Rather is she suffering from alienation of a depressive character. She's unquestionably been the victim of some sort of violence.

Actress That's possible.

They cross to her again

Actor How has she been?

Actress Improving steadily, I think.

Actor Walking at all?

Actress Oh yes. Sometimes she sits out on the balcony. She washes herself now and yesterday she had her first proper bath.

Actor Oh, splendid.

Actress Takes quite an interest in life too—judging from her smiles. But of course she's not speaking yet.

Actor Not at all?

Actress No.

Actor Is she eating more?

Actress Oh yes. Put on a little weight too.

Actor That's good, at any rate.

Actress I don't know how to put it—but she's co-operative. If she's silent, it's not a sullen silence. It's quite polite. Oh dear, I feel if we could only reach her, we'd like her.

Actor I'd like to see her walk.

Actress The doctor would like to see you walk about a bit, dear.

Mrs Manahan gets up quite readily and walks about

Actor She understands perfectly.

Actress Do you notice something, Doctor? She walks well. Look at that turn. She's very graceful.

Actor Well?

Actress I think she's been taught deportment.

They are now either side of her

Actor I agree. Despite her thinness and her whole appearance, she's been well cared for. Sit down again, will you please? I want to look at your feet. *(He examines the feet)* Yes, I'm right. They've had treatment. Expert treatment too. There's no doubt about it, she comes from a rich family.

They move away from her. She watches anxiously

That's what's so extraordinary about her. I mean, if she comes from a rich family why aren't they looking for her? She's been here a year now and not one enquiry from anyone, not one answer to an advertisement.

Actress Perhaps she isn't German.

Actor That's an idea.

Actress The Matron wondered if she was a refugee. She's not only been well brought up, she's been strictly brought up. She's very modest. She washes most carefully. She's very clean in her habits. I'd think she'd been taught in a convent if she didn't cross herself the wrong way.

Actor How do you mean?

Actress Right to left instead of left to right. Like so.

Actor Then she's Orthodox. They do that. *(He crosses to her)* Would you like to get back into bed?

Mrs Manahan Yes.

Silence

Actor *(very gently)* So you can speak.

Mrs Manahan Yes.

Actor And German too?

Mrs Manahan A little.

Actor But you're not German.

She is silent

Where do you come from? What happened to you in your native country?

She is silent

Have you any relatives? What did you run away from?

Mrs Manahan covers her face in her hands and tries to hide

Actress It's no use, Doctor. Once she does that, it's hopeless.

Actor Put her back to bed.

Actress Come along now. There's a good girl.

The Actress puts Mrs Manahan to bed and exits

The Actor crosses to the desk and sits

The Inspector comes in. He is, in fact, the 1st Inspector's father. He has a moustache and is wearing clothes which would be very correct for 1922

Actor Ah, Inspector.

Inspector It's good of you to see me again.

Actor Not at all. I'm most interested in this case. Have you made any progress?

Inspector I've drawn a complete blank everywhere. I've tried every possible hotel and almost every boarding house. No single girl registered anywhere. Any possible family visiting Berlin with a daughter between sixteen and twenty-five has been checked. No daughter is missing. Berlin families have all been checked too.

Actor She's not German.

Inspector How do you know?

Actor She's beginning to talk. Just a little.

Inspector Good. Now I can question her.

Actor No, no, you can't. She gets frightened and does this extraordinary hiding action, crouching and covering her face. She's been ill-treated, hit, stabbed and knocked about. You can't question her yet.

Inspector Has she been raped?

Actor No, but she's not a virgin.

Inspector She couldn't be quite simply a tart?

Actor No, no, no. She's far too modest.

Inspector I've known some very demure tarts in my time.

Actor Everything about her is virtuous, not to say prudish. If she's a tart the world is square, you're a woman and I'm the Kaiser. No, no. On the other hand she's had a baby.

Inspector You're sure.

Actor Quite. There are physical changes in a woman when she's had a baby and she's got them all. One or two could be coincidence but not all of them.

Inspector So we have a young woman, frightened, suicidal, mother of a child, from a rich family, victim of violence, alone in Berlin, February nineteen-twenty and no one reports her missing, no one cares, no one asks for her and she won't tell us anything. When she talks, what does she say?

Actor Yes please. No thank you. I am feeling better. I am not so well. Nothing, nothing about herself other than that.

Inspector The accent?

Actor Indefinable. It's quite good German, but it's taught. On the other hand she's often heard it spoken. She understands everything.

Inspector (*moving away to exit*) Let me know any fresh developments, Doctor.

Actor There is one thing.

Inspector Yes?

Actor She's very religious and prays.

Inspector So?

Actor She crosses herself in the Orthodox fashion.

Inspector Greek Orthodox?

Actor Yes.

Inspector She's not Greek. At least she doesn't look it. Still, it narrows the field a bit. She's not Jewish, Roman Catholic or Protestant. It narrows the nationality down too. There may be Orthodox Portuguese or Danes, but it's unlikely. Romanian? No. Polish?

Actor Catholic.

Inspector Serb?

Actor I've thought of Russian, but she doesn't look it.

Inspector She looks German to me. Try her out with various foreign languages. It might give us a lead. I don't mind admitting this case is beginning to intrigue me.

He exits

Mrs Manahan is seated reading

The Actress comes in

Actress Time to take your temperature. I'll pop it into your mouth. There . . . what's that you're reading? An English magazine . . . interesting?

Mrs Manahan nods happily

What are we today? Let's look. Quite normal. Those pills have helped a lot, haven't they, dear . . .

Mrs Manahan I'm much better. There's nowhere near as much pain in my arm.

Actress Good. I wish I could speak English. I'm trying to learn it. (*Very slowly*) 'Ow do you do, Mrs Brown? It is very hot today. Can I have some tea, please?

Mrs Manahan laughs

What are you laughing at?

Mrs Manahan Your English. You have such a funny accent.

The Actress smiles vaguely and walks away. Then she crosses briskly to the Actor at his desk

Actress It worked. I left the magazines about as you suggested. French, Spanish, Italian, English. She took an English one and I found her reading it.

Actor Understanding it too?

Actress Obviously. Well, then I said I was learning English—and I am—so I spoke a few phrases and she laughed and I asked her why, and she said my accent was funny. I think she speaks English very well indeed.

Actor English? She can't be English. What would an English girl of good family be doing in Berlin in nineteen-twenty? The war was only just over. Businessman's child? Diplomat's daughter? They'd go to the police.

Actress Perhaps she married a German?

Actor When? Before nineteen-fourteen she'd be too young—and I'm certain she's had a child. She can't have married a German before nineteen-nineteen because of the war—so she'd a year to marry, have a child and get stranded and lost, be beaten up, stabbed, knocked about and commit suicide. It's out of the question. No, no. Continue with the Inspector's instructions. Chatter to her easily and happily, but don't ask questions, they make her suspicious.

The Actor exits

Actress Of course not doctor. (*She walks briskly to Mrs Manahan*) And how are we this morning?

Mrs Manahan Much better.

Actress Nurse tells me you've eaten quite a big breakfast. How splendid.

Mrs Manahan I love the autumn, don't you? It's looking so lovely out. I do hope I will soon be allowed to go for walks.

Actress The doctor's so pleased with you, it won't be long now. I shall be having to decide about my holiday soon.

Mrs Manahan Surely you have your holiday in the summer?

Actress Usually. I love winter sports so much though. I'm taking mine in the winter this year. My friend wants me to go to Sweden or Norway where, of course, the skiing is lovely and I want to go to Switzerland. Of course, it will be more expensive.

Mrs Manahan Why?

Actress Further away, but we can get a cheap pension. Then there's the rate of exchange. That's a worry too.

Mrs Manahan Oh, is travelling expensive?

Actress Enormously.

Mrs Manahan Gracious. I never knew that. I used to travel quite a lot once.

Actress I love trains.

Mrs Manahan It's funny, as a little girl, though I was often train sick, I was never sea sick.

The Actress is silent, she dare not ask a question

Of course, Papa's yacht was an excellent sea boat so we were lucky. I'd love to go to Switzerland with you. It must be lovely.

The Actress can't resist a question

Actress You've never been there?

Mrs Manahan No, no.

Actress Of course, I'm nervous about going abroad at all.

Mrs Manahan Why?

Actress Germans are not popular abroad. They tell such lies about us. The French I mean. They say we started the war. Such nonsense. Germany was encircled.

Mrs Manahan That's not true. Your Kaiser was so aggressive making all those threats. Then he should never have allied himself to Austria like that. Austria would never have delivered such an outrageous ultimatum to the King of Serbia without your Kaiser's backing. Russia had to keep her word and defend Serbia. She had a treaty with her she had to honour.

The Actress is staring at her amazed. Mrs Manahan suddenly realizes what she's said and stares back appalled. She also understands she's fallen into a trap

Actress Who are you?

Mrs Manahan retreats, she cringes into her chair, covers her face in her hands and tries to hide. She relapses in terror like earlier attitudes when first in hospital

The Actress leaves her side still staring at her

Mrs Manahan I nearly gave myself away. Papa, Papa, I mentioned Papa.

But that was earlier. That was earlier, earlier. The Kaiser, what did I say about the Kaiser? I must keep calm, keep calm, keep calm. *(She picks up a paper and starts to try and read it. Her hands are trembling violently. She turns over a few pages blindly. Suddenly she stops and reads intently. Far from calming her, this sends her into raging hysterics. She flings the paper down)* The Bolsheviks demand return of all Russian citizens—no. No. No. I can't, I can't. Don't make me. God help me.

Actress *(rushing to her)* Calm down. Calm down. That's a good girl. What is it? What is it? Tell me what the matter is, tell me, oh please tell me.

Mrs Manahan subsides onto the floor moaning, her hands move frenziedly as if warding off blows and then she becomes silent. The Actress helps her onto her chair where she sits staring apathetically into space

Actress Just shut your eyes and rest and I'll be back in a little while.

She exits

The Actor appears with the Inspector

The Actress joins them

Actress It was most extraordinary. She was talking lucidly, clearly, authoritatively even.

Inspector Authoritatively?

Actress Yes. I have never seen anything like it. I really am quite shattered.

The Actress moves with the Inspector to near the desk

The Actor works on Mrs Manahan and gives her an injection

Actress I was chattering to her as you said, she'd been eating well, she wanted to be allowed out.

Inspector She was quite happy?

Actress Perfectly. Absolutely normal. I talked about going abroad.

Inspector Well?

Actress She doesn't understand the cost of things and I can tell you why. She has been very, very rich indeed.

Inspector How do you know?

Actress Papa had a yacht.

Inspector A yacht? Well that, of course, could be anything from a small sailing boat to a luxury steam yacht.

Actress It was a good sea boat.

Inspector Probably large then.

The Actor joins them

Actor I'm afraid we're right back to the beginning again. She's shut everything off.

Actress I'm so sorry doctor.

Inspector Papa had a yacht. A big one we think. A good sea boat.

Actor I'm sure it's not your fault, Sister. She's bound to have these setbacks from time to time. What actually caused the breakdown?

Actress I talked about going abroad. I mentioned the war, then I said Germans were unpopular abroad and that we'd been encircled by enemies and she flatly contradicted me. She knew the whole political background—she knew about Serbia and the Austrian ultimatum and she was quite distinctly anti-German. I said, "Who are you?" She stared in terror, she tried to calm herself, then she picked up a paper, read something and went quite, quite mad.

Inspector Something in the paper? Can you get it?

Actress Yes. (*She crosses to Mrs Manahan*)

Inspector If you have yachts, you are enormously rich. If you are that rich your family makes fusses if you vanish.

Actor Perhaps they're not that rich any more.

Actress Here we are.

Inspector What page?

Actress I don't know. Front page I suppose.

Inspector Might be anything . . . Queen of Romania visits sister . . . New National Socialist Party . . . Bolshevik Government demands return of Russians. . . . What's this? American millionaire in search . . . Oh looking for ancestors . . . This is no good, it might be anything. Well we've got one step forward—if Papa had a big enough yacht before the war it will be registered. I can check on that. If they're rich enough they'll be in Social Registers.

He exits, followed by the Actress

Actor (*crossing to Mrs Manahan*) You've recovered quicker from our little set-back than I thought.

Mrs Manahan Yes.

Actor Eating well?

Mrs Manahan Yes.

Actor How is the arm?

Mrs Manahan Better.

Actor Not very talkative, are we?

Mrs Manahan No.

Actor Oh well. (*He decides to go on trying*) You know we're only trying to help you. You clearly remember something about the past.

She is silent

You must have had relations and friends once.

She is silent

Someone must have cared for you at one time.

She starts to cry

Did you have any brothers and sisters?

She retreats and hides

Unless you tell us something we can't help you.

The Inspector enters and paces about

The Actress comes in. She no longer has her white coat on and looks as different as she can from the nurse she's been playing hitherto. Her hair perhaps is swept back

Inspector You know of our problem, Fraulein Hoede? Of our mystery?

Actress as Fraulein Hoede The whole hospital talks of nothing else.

Inspector I'm sure. Have you met her?

Actress Indeed. I take books and magazines to her as I take to all other patients. I try to interest her in games and in the outside world.

Inspector What do you make of her?

Actress She is unquestionably a real lady. She is always perfectly amiable but sometimes if displeased she can be haughty.

Inspector What interests her?

Actress Politics do. She is knowledgeable. She seldom if ever talks of them, but she reads political articles with interest. I can tell.

Inspector You speak several languages?

Actress Oh yes.

Inspector Well?

Actress Very well. My father was in the German consular service and served in France and England and for a very long time in Russia—in Yalta—and of course before the war in Argentina. He always insisted we went to local schools and I have a natural ear for languages.

Inspector Is she German?

Actress No, no. Her German is excellent, but not her native language.

Inspector English or French?

Actress I would hardly think so. She could be Russian. There was a very wealthy and quite large business class particularly around Moscow of course. Her father could be a business man with some political interests or appointments.

Inspector She mentioned a yacht.

Actress Many well-to-do Russians had a summer place in the Baltic.

Inspector Try her suddenly with Russian. Don't question her. Slip from German to Russian without warning. Thank you Fraulein.

The Actress, now carrying some books and magazines, crosses to Mrs Manahan

Actress Good afternoon, my dear. I've brought you some books. Biographies. I believe you like biographies . . .

Mrs Manahan Thank you, Fraulein Hoede.

Actress Disraeli. He was a British Prime Minister.

Mrs Manahan I know. A great favourite of Queen Victoria What's this?

Actress Very interesting—and very long. A biography of Bismarck . . . I found it fascinating, but then my father was in the Consular Service. He was all over the place, particularly in Yalta.

The Actress now starts to speak in Russian—I have put here the English translation of what they say but if possible Russian should be spoken

I used to love walking in the parks there . . . Lyetam ani krassivie.
A—zimoy luche.

Mrs Manahan (*in Russian*) They are lovely. In a way, though, I preferred the parks in St Petersburg. I'll take this book on Bismarck.

Actress Of course. You don't want any others?

Mrs Manahan Niet.

The Actress moves away

(*Watching her suspiciously*) Oh, God. I was speaking Russian. They are trying to trap me. I have no friends. No friends at all. Even when nice, they aren't my friends. That's what I must remember always . . .

The Actress crosses to the Inspector and the Actor

Actress She talks Russian like a native.

Inspector So that's what her accent is.

Actress She gives certain words the harsh Russian stress in the first syllable.
It was silly of me not to have realized it before.

Actor Thank you, Fraulein. That was most helpful.

Actress Anything to help.

The Actress exits

Inspector Have you questioned her about her childhood, Doctor?

Actor Yes. She evades answering. Sometimes she lets things slip by accident, but a direct question shuts her up.

Inspector Her arm still hurts her, I suppose?

Actor Yes. It's better, but I'm sure still painful at times.

Inspector Is she pretending?

Actor I'm sure she's not. We've had her here for two years. No one can keep up a pretence like that for that time. She's unquestionably well-educated. In several languages too. German, English and now Russian. Her choice of words is felicitous. She's been surrounded by erudite, articulate people all her life. Shall I tell you what I think?

The Actress enters, picks up a shawl and again looks quite different. She crosses the stage and sits in a chair

She's suffering from auto suggestive amnesia which is perfectly genuine but which originates in the wish to suppress unpleasant experiences. She has a basically happy nature, and so when she's happy and relaxed this comes out and she can unconsciously mention the past, but only happy memories. The moment she's questioned and she thinks consciously

about the past, she retreats and withdraws and forgets. It's a defence mechanism at work.

Inspector Can we break it down?

Actor Very difficult. A shock or an extreme emotion like sudden blind rage could do it perhaps.

They exit

Mrs Manahan sees the Actress as Klara Peuthert seated, crosses to her and smiles pleasantly

Mrs Manahan You're the new patient here?

The Actress is silent and looks at her

I'm one of the patients too. It's a bit frightening when you first come here, isn't it? But you'll get used to it.

The Actress is suspicious and stares at her. Mrs Manahan is kind and pleasant and warm and friendly

I've been here two years now and so I often help the nurses.

The Actress is silent and stares

Would you like something to read? These magazines are nice.

Silence. Mrs Manahan moves away. The Actress never takes her eyes off her

Why is she staring at me? She's done nothing else but stare at me for days. What is the matter with her? She never stares at anybody else like that. Only at me. *(She crosses the stage briskly)*

The Actress continues to stare at her

(Stopping) It's uncanny. Abnormal. Of course, she can't be fully sane if she's here, but why pick on me? What have I done?

Mrs Manahan, who has behaved normally and reasonably until then, suddenly becomes frightened and suspicious

She's an informer. An agent provocateur! She's a police spy! Of course! They realize I'm Russian and they're going to deport me.

Mrs Manahan starts to move agitatedly about. She sits, she gets up, she crosses and recrosses the stage. All the time the Actress stares at her. From being normal and sane, Mrs Manahan is on the verge of hysterics. Suddenly the Actress starts to shout triumphantly

Actress I've got it. It's been puzzling me for weeks but I've got it. I know you.

Mrs Manahan stares at her terrified. The Actress leaps up

I know who you are.

Mrs Manahan cringes in horror and hides her face. The Actress stands over her still shouting

I know exactly who you are. You can't fool me. (*She is jubilant and runs about the stage*) I know who she is, I know who she is.

The Actress dashes from the stage

The effect on Mrs Manahan is devastating. She is petrified and talks hysterically to herself

Mrs Manahan I admit nothing. I've never seen her before. I don't speak Russian. I'm not Russian. Not Russian. Not Russian. I can't remember anything.

The Actor runs on

Actor What the bloody hell is going on?

Mrs Manahan I know nothing. I know nothing. I know nothing. (*She starts to scream*) Oh, God help me. Help me. (*She is yelling, screaming, sobbing*)

The Inspector rushes on

Actor (*shouting*) Hold her arm.

The Inspector tries to. Mrs Manahan is struggling furiously

Inspector It's all right. No one will hurt you.

Actor Hold her arm still for me. (*He gives her an injection*)

Mrs Manahan subsides, moaning, to the floor

Find the nurse. I'll get her into bed.

Inspector Nurse! Nurse!

The Actor helps Mrs Manahan into bed

The Actress appears on the other side of the stage. She is in a state of great excitement

Actress I recognized her! I recognized her at once. Oh, she couldn't fool me. It had been worrying me for days, for weeks even. She's fooled everyone else—doctors, nurses, everyone. But not me. They say she even fooled the police. But she didn't fool me. The moment I saw her—the very moment I saw her—I said to myself, "I've seen you before". Of course I never said it out loud. That's where I was so clever. I watched her. I watched the way she walked and talked, and even the way she sat, and suddenly—bang! I recognized her. Just like that!

The telephone rings

Inspector Hallo. No, we have not found Klara Peuthert. Yes. Klara Peuthert. Yes that's right. She was a governess with the Demidoff family. Yes, in Russia. I know the Press is very interested but I don't know anything more. I'm very busy. Goodbye.

The Actor and Actress (both looking quite different from before) see each other, exclaim with delight and approach each other like old friends who haven't seen each other for years

Actor as General Countess! Is it really you?

Actress as Countess General! After all these years!

Actor (*kissing her hand*) When did we last meet?

Actress At the French Embassy, wasn't it? They gave a dinner party. You had just married.

Actor Ah, yes. We little thought . . .

Actress She escaped too, I hope?

Actor Alas, no. She was murdered with my parents in Moscow.

Actress It's too sad. So few escaped.

Actor You've heard the news?

Actress Who hasn't? Berlin talks of nothing else.

Actor Apparently it was all most dramatic. They were in the same hospital ward.

Actress Hospital? I heard they met in prison.

Actor No, it was in hospital, and this lady's maid—who's a patient—saw her, recognized her, screamed her name and fainted dead away for ten hours.

The Inspector is at his desk, talking into the telephone

Inspector Hallo. Now look here. The moment I know anything more I'll tell you. No, there is no warrant for Klara Peuthert's arrest. She is not a criminal. No, she has not been certified. Klara Peuthert was a voluntary patient and was within her rights to leave whenever she liked. Look! If you want the law changed, get on to the Minister of Health, but don't bother me. (*He rings off*) Bloody reporters!

The Actor and Actress greet each other again

Actor as Baron Madame.

Actress as Madame My dear Baron.

Actor What's the latest?

Actress I'm told they recognized each other at once.

Actor That's what the police say—but it's not true.

Actress Not true?

Actor It's a put-up job.

Actress Really?

Actor Oh yes. This lady's maid had a criminal record, and under cross-examination she confessed . . .

Actress Goodness!

Actor She's an imposter! It's absolutely true, so now they've both been arrested. There won't be a trial, of course, the authorities don't want one—in any case, she's mad.

They exit

Inspector (*on the telephone*) Put me through to extension three-nine-three, please. . . . Yes, the Foreign Department. . . . It's beginning to fit. It really is beginning to fit. . . . speaks German, English, Russian, Papa had a yacht. Is Greek Orthodox, was very rich and is interested in politics. . . . Hallo. . . . It's the police here. . . . Now that is interesting. . . . When she left the

Demidoffs she worked for a while with the German Ambassador's family in St Petersburg. . . . As a matter of interest, his children would be received everywhere, wouldn't they? Meet everyone? The governess, going along too as chaperon, would meet them too, wouldn't she?

The Actress enters as Sister

Well, thank you very much. You have been most helpful. Goodbye. (*He rings off*) Forgive me, Sister, and thank you for coming. Now, Sister, you are usually on duty in the daytime?

Actress Yes, Inspector, but I've told you everything I know already.

Inspector Yes, yes. We know what happens when she gets upset or excited, but you observe her all the time, don't you?

Actress That's part of my job.

Inspector What does she do when she thinks she's alone, when she thinks she's unobserved?

Actress I don't know how to answer that, where to begin.

Inspector Go through her day.

Actress The whole day?

Inspector Yes. Omit nothing.

Actress Well . . . she gets up and washes, she's very clean and is quite meticulous. Many of the more disturbed patients aren't. Then she makes her bed. We encourage our patients to do little tasks like that. Most of them are slapdash about it. She isn't. She makes her bed beautifully, turns the mattress regularly, folds the sheets tidily. Come to think of it, I wouldn't be at all surprised if she'd had a little training as a nurse herself. Is anything the matter, Inspector?

The Inspector hands her a book

(*Looking at it*) Good heavens! You don't mean those wild stories we're hearing could be true?

Inspector If they're right, that is a picture of her mother in nurse's uniform. Read what it says underneath.

Actress Photograph taken at the front.

Inspector The last sentence. Read the last sentence.

Actress She always encouraged her daughters to train as nurses too. (*She cannot keep the excitement out of her voice. She loses her professional calm*) Oh, my goodness! Well! And there's even a resemblance.

Inspector Keep calm, Sister.

Actress Yes, yes, of course. I am calm, quite calm. But isn't it exciting?

Inspector It's not certain yet.

Actress (*her excitement mounting*) When she helps us with the trays, she lays them out professionally, even to the knives and forks. Why didn't we realize it before? I remember in the war I had young trainee nurses and one of the best turned out to be—well, I forget who exactly, but of most exalted birth. Oh what a to-do! What excitement! Wait till I tell them in the hospital. They'll all be so thrilled.

Inspector Don't jump to conclusions.

Actress No, no, of course not. I won't say a word.

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