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SF PERUSALS

Anybody for Murder?

A Play

Brian Clemens
and Dennis Spooner

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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ANYBODY FOR MURDER?

First presented at The Mill Theatre, Sonning, by Sally Hughes on 22nd August, 1989, with the following cast of characters:

Max Harrington	Robert East
Suzy Stevens	Emma Myant
Janet Harrington	Linda Jean Barry
Edgar Chambers	Barrie Gosney
Mary Ticklewell	Jacqueline Clarke
George Ticklewell	Keith Smith

Directed by Douglas Argent
Setting by John Elvery

CHARACTERS

Max Harrington
Janet Harrington
Suzy Stevens
Edgar Chambers
Mary Ticklewell
George Ticklewell

The action takes place in a converted farmhouse situated on the remotest peninsula of an equally remote and tiny Greek island

ACT I
SCENE 1 Morning
SCENE 2 Early evening
SCENE 3 Late that night

ACT II
SCENE 1 The next morning
SCENE 2 A few minutes later

Time—the present

Note: It is suggested that, before the curtain rises on Acts I and II, Greek bazouki music be played.

It is not imperative that Suzy Stevens be red-haired—she could be brunette, or blonde, and the dialogue amended accordingly.

ACT I

SCENE 1

The main, ground floor area of a converted farmhouse. The farmhouse is situated on the remotest peninsula of an equally remote and tiny Greek island. It is early morning

The conversion has turned the original farmhouse into something closely resembling the more conventional holiday villa. This main area has been gutted to provide space for cooking, dining and living

Centre back are french doors, wide open to a small patio; beyond this is a backdrop of wide sky, and the suggestion of arid, rocky ground leading away to cliffs, and eventually, the sea. In front of the french doors is a breakfast table; adjacent to it is a tiny kitchen area with a working surface, pantry cupboards, a small sink, a waste-bin, etc.

Downstage L *are some steps leading up to a kind of mezzanine-level gallery; off this gallery are the doors to the master bedroom and bathroom. Both gallery and stairs are part of the original structure, and have terrazzo floors; at the top of the stairs is a small rug. Also a small table with a vase on it. At one end of the gallery is a window*

Further downstage, and L *is a door leading to the guest-room. The stairs partially screen someone at this door from seeing fully the body of the main area. We presume that a bathroom is* en suite *with the guest bedroom*

R *is a door under the gallery, leading into a tiny workroom. The main area is furnished with a sofa, chairs, a small bureau, a drinks cabinet and a small table bearing a vase identical to the one in the gallery, but all these items have been shipped from Britain, there are only a few items of Greek bric-a-brac in the area—which feels relentlessly British*

Somewhere in the area a coffee percolator bubbles merrily

The stage is empty, then the workroom door opens and Max Harrington enters, carrying a small paper bag. Max is an attractive man, who has natural charm, cares about his appearance, and is a womanizer. There is something altogether furtive about him as he looks up at the closed bathroom door, and then moves to the table that is set for breakfast. He picks up the sugar bowl, looks around, sees a decorative bowl nearby, and moves to pour the contents of the sugar bowl into it

Suddenly Janet Harrington, wearing a robe, comes out of the bathroom on the gallery. Janet is Max's wife; an attractive woman with long blonde hair. She has a slight lisping impediment of speech that causes her to say her "r's" as

"w's"—this allied to her air of wide-eyed innocence, makes her seem more naïve than she actually is. It also tends to make her seem vulnerable, and very likeable indeed

Max presses back into cover under the gallery as Janet moves towards the bedroom

Janet exits into the bedroom

Satisfied that she has gone for the moment, Max re-emerges into the body of the room again—picks up the now empty sugar bowl and pours the contents of the paper bag into it. He now pours the sugar back into the bowl again, stirs it with his finger and places the sugar bowl back on the table. He regards the sugar bowl—then moves it so as to be nearer one of the place settings. He is still regarding this when ... Suzy Stevens enters through the french doors. Suzy is a bit of a bombshell, young, attractive, sexy, with a superb figure shown off to advantage by the wet swimsuit she wears. Her hair, long and blonde, is wet too, a chunk of seaweed adheres to her swimsuit. She is shivering

Suzy Max.
Max Suzy! You're much too early. I haven't done it yet!

Suzy tries to speak through chattering teeth

And you're all wet—that wasn't part of the plan. You were supposed to be *rowing*, not swimming!
Suzy The wig blew off... (*She pulls off the long blonde wig to reveal her short red hair beneath*) I had to go overboard and get the damned thing! Max, I'm freezing.

Max, with constant looks up at the closed bedroom door, urges Suzy to the guest bedroom

Max The guest room! You'll find towels in there. Stay out of sight until it's over.
Suzy Max——
Max (*overriding*) Janet'll be down any minute.

Max pushes Suzy into the guest bedroom—and as she goes, the seaweed drops to the floor outside the door

Suzy exits

Max very agitated, closes the door, and then he sees the seaweed and reacts. As he picks it up ...

Janet enters from the bedroom. She still wears her robe

Janet Max Harrington, you're up to something!

Max spins round and stares up at Janet

I heard you, rattling around in that den of yours at six-thirty this morning. And what on earth is that you're holding?
Max This!? Why it's seaweed of course.

Janet Seaweed!? (*During the next exchange she descends the stairs*)
Max Yes, I . . . I read about it in the *New Scientist* . . . It can be processed into fertilizer . . . and if it can, I intend doing it . . . and spreading it on our own personal piece of desert out there.
Janet Darling, you never give up, do you? Mmm, that coffee smells good. (*She moves to pour herself a cup of coffee*)

Max watches her then hurries over to pick up the sugar bowl

Max Sugar, darling?
Janet You *are* up to something.
Max (*reacting, waving seaweed*) Darling, I *told* you——

Janet takes her coffee and ascends the stairs again as:

Janet (*interjecting*) Preoccupied then. You know very well I never take sugar in my coffee.

Janet exits into the bedroom

Max remains. A moment

The guest bedroom door opens and Suzy appears, still wearing just a swimsuit

Suzy I can't find any towels!
Max In the drawer!
Suzy I've looked in the drawer!
Max Then try the top shelf of the cupboard——
Edgar (*off*) Max?!
Max Oh, Lord! It's Edgar—get back in there! (*He thrusts Suzy back into the guest room*)

Suzy exits

Max closes the door—just in time

Edgar Chambers enters through the french doors. Edgar is tall, spare and eccentric, a man who always looks untidy

Edgar Max?
Max Edgar!

Edgar walks right past him—and over to a small cabinet which he opens to take out a bottle of ouzo and a glass

Edgar you can't stay here! It's gone eight thirty. The ferry will arrive any minute.

Edgar waves him aside—pours himself a glass of ouzo

It's the third Wednesday of the month, Edgar, *your* turn to make the trip to the mainland. You *are* going to the mainland?

Edgar, having drained his glass, shows some signs of recovery, then starts to recharge his glass

Edgar The ferry's late. I saw it on my way here, still more than a mile off shore . . . won't get here for another ten minutes at least. I'll catch it all right.

Max seems relieved

(*He sips his drink and then adds*) That's if I decide to go.

Max If!? But you've got to go.

Edgar stares into his glass

What's wrong? Why are you drinking so early?

Edgar fully regards Max for the first time

Edgar I've done it, Max. I've committed my murder.

Max But that's marvellous news!

Max urges Edgar towards the door

You must tell me all about it when you get back.

Edgar (*pulling free from Max*) The whole Wilson family, Max. I killed them all. Even Grandma. And all thanks to you.

Max (*still intent on getting him out*) Oh, I just gave you some technical advice, that's all.

Edgar No, no you gave me more than that. You gave me an untraceable poison . . . I won't be getting rejections on this one—the publishers will be beating a path to my door. This is going to make me thriller writer of the year. I'm on my way, Max.

Max I hope towards the ferry.

Edgar Eh?

Janet enters from the bedroom—dressed now, in beach jacket and shorts

Janet Edgar! Aren't you going to miss the ferry? (*To Max*) It *is* his turn, isn't it?

Max He's just leaving.

Janet descends the stairs

Edgar I had to drop by and tell you the good news.

Janet Good news? Edgar, you haven't!?

Edgar I have. The whole Wilson family. Even Grandma. In Chapter One.

Janet Oh, really well done, Edgar.

Max Yes, yes . . . now, Edgar, the ferry . . .

Edgar I'm thinking of drowning Jennifer.

Janet Who's Jennifer?

Max Jennifer's the governess . . . now look, if he's going to catch that boat——

Janet (*overriding*) If she's anything like my governess was, drowning would be too good for her . . . boiled in oil more likely.

Edgar But she wouldn't be rowing in oil.

Janet Who's rowing?

Edgar You were. That's what gave me the idea.

Max *Edgar.*

Janet *I* gave you the idea?
Edgar Well, these past couple of days, when I've seen you out rowing around the headland——
Janet Me? Rowing? Why would I be rowing?
Max Seaweed.
Janet Seaweed?
Max Darling, I already told you ... (*To Edgar*) I'm working on a new tack—convert seaweed into fertilizer—then perhaps I can come to grips with that moonscape out there.
Edgar (*to Janet*) So that's what you were doing, collecting seaweed?
Max The ferry, Edgar. The ferry.
Edgar Ah! Yes. Be back tomorrow ... (*He starts to hurriedly exit through the french doors*) We can talk more about drowning, *and* I've got a decapitation in mind!

Edgar exits

Max sighs with relief—then moves to the table

Max Thank goodness!
Janet (*regarding him*) Why on earth did you let Edgar think I go out rowing?
Max Anything to get rid of him——

They sit down to breakfast, Janet in the seat nearest the sugar bowl

—I don't think I could have taken decapitation with my cornflakes. Besides, I was looking forward to breakfast with just the two of us.
Janet You haven't said that in a long time. In fact there are lots of things you haven't said—or done—in a long time.

Janet now takes the sugar bowl and liberally scatters sugar on her cornflakes. Max stares at her intently—she glances up—he "covers" with a smile. This done, she adds milk. She picks up her spoon to eat—he waits tensely—and then, she lowers the spoon again

I saw Suzy Stevens just now.
Max *What?* (*He turns to look at the guest room door*)
Janet Least I thought I did—this morning from the bedroom window. I saw a girl swimming off the headland, a girl with short red hair—just like Suzy Stevens. Of course, it couldn't have been her.
Max Of course it couldn't have.
Janet After all, what would she be doing here? You promised you'd never see or contact her again.
Max And *we* promised never to discuss her again.
Janet I'm sorry, it was seeing that girl just now, brought it all back.
Max Darling, I had a brief affair ...
Janet Brief? It went on for a whole year.
Max But it's over now, all in the past—now come, let's enjoy our breakfast. *Please?*
Janet (*starting to eat*) Do you regret moving here? I mean, it was basically my idea, and you threw up a promising career ...

Max Darling, I was a second-class research chemist in a third-class job.
Janet But the reason for coming here – starting our own vineyard hasn't worked out . . .
Max Maybe not yet, but it will—you'll see.
Janet Darling, you're always so optimistic . . . and I've every confidence that you'll come up with the answer soon. (*She now collapses unconscious—her face in the cornflakes bowl*)
Max (*regarding her coldly*) Sooner than you think! (*He rises, moves to fling open the guest room door wide*)

A beat, then Suzy enters, wrapped in a towel, sans *wig*

Suzy. Darling.

They kiss passionately—then Suzy breaks the embrace

Suzy Don't you think you should lift her head out of the cornflakes? It could ruin the plan if she's found with milk in her lungs!

Max moves to lift Janet's head and leaves her propped in the chair. Then he moves back to Suzy again

Max Darling we've done it.
Suzy Not yet. She isn't dead yet.
Max No, but she'll be asleep for quite a while. And when she wakes up she'll be dead. (*Elated now*) And then, in a month or two, the insurance will be through and I'll be ten thousand pounds richer. *We* will. Then it's goodbye to this "mature vineyard with great potential" . . . Look at it—fifty acres of Gobi Desert—the only thing that'll grow out there are pyramids.
Suzy But you'll sell it off, won't you?
Max Yes, I might get lucky and find another mug—or a homesick Arab.
Suzy Max, let's get it over and done with.
Max OK. You'll need the wig.

Suzy nods and exits into the guest bedroom

Max takes the sugar bowl into the workroom then emerges and takes Janet out of the chair, lays her on the ground, and strips off her beach jacket, to leave her in halter top and shorts

Suzy enters from the guest bedroom, just finishing adjusting the blonde wig on her head

Max tosses her Janet's jacket, which she puts on

Now, let's make sure we haven't overlooked anything. We'll take Janet down to the bay and hide her behind a rock. *You* will then get the boat—you'll be wearing the wig and her jacket so that——
Suzy (*interjecting*) If there *are* any tourists sailing off shore——
Max (*interjecting*) They'd swear they saw a woman with long, blonde hair—moving—very much alive! Then, once we are sure the coast is *really* clear—we prop her up in the boat . . . wedge her in——

Suzy Push the boat out.

Max The current sweeps it out to sea—and five or six minutes later, one of these little chaps goes to work. (*He produces a bunghole*) A soluble bungplug.

Suzy It melts away, water floods in.

Max And both boat and Janet descend gently to the ocean bed. Which is rather apt, because she'll be still asleep.

Suzy And when they find the body——

Max Which, the way the currents run around here, may not be for weeks—months even—there won't be much left to identify. Perfect.

Suzy You've thought of everything.

Max The successful murderer has to. (*He reacts*) That's funny.

Suzy regards him

"Murderer". That's the first time I've consciously thought of it like that. That's what we are, isn't it? Murderers.

Suzy I prefer . . . lovers.

They embrace

How do we get her down to the bay?

Max Wheelbarrow along the lower road.

Suzy But that passes right by your neighbour's place.

Max He's away. We have the whole island to ourselves. Come on.

Suzy and Max lift Janet and exit through the french doors

There is now a pause

Mary (*off; suddenly*) Yoohoo! Yoohoo!

A pause—and then Max and Suzy enter backwards through the french doors in a hurry—still carrying Janet

(*Off*) Yoohoo!

Suzy Who is it?

Max I don't know!

Suzy *What are we going to do!?*

Max Quick!

They quickly take the body and place it down behind the sofa

At that moment, Mary enters. Mary Ticklewell is a gushing, rather prepossessing woman who is dressed in black more for an upper-middle-class mourning in Esher, than for the arid heat of a Greek island. She is panting somewhat

Mary Janet Harrington? Yes, of course it is; slim, attractive, blonde. That nice, kind neighbour of yours was very specific. But of course, George got the directions mixed up as usual . . . *insisted* it was the other house, *refused* to climb the hill until I made sure. And you must be Mr Harrington? George will be so pleased. (*She extends her hand*) Ticklewell. Mary Ticklewell. Been dying to meet you.

Max (*finally*) We . . . we . . . haven't met, have we?
Mary Not till now. I'll go and fetch George. You haven't met him either.

Mary exits

Suzy and Max regard each other—stunned

Suzy She thinks I'm Janet.
Max Well, we'll have to play along for the moment! (*As he speaks, he moves back to Janet's body and lifts it up*) Come on, we've got to get her out of sight.

Suzy helps him lift the body—and they move towards the nearest door—the guest bedroom

No, not there—the lock's broken—upstairs, in her own room.

Max and Suzy start to carry Janet up the stairs

Suzy They'll know I'm not Janet.
Max Why should they—they're complete strangers? Anyway, you've been *pretending* to be Janet for the last three days.
Suzy Only from a distance.
Max Don't worry, don't panic, and I'll get rid of them as soon as I can.

Suzy and Max, carrying Janet, exit into the master bedroom

George enters on to the patio—he carries two huge suitcases—and now puts them down and mops his brow. George Ticklewell is exactly the kind of man one would expect to find married to Mary. Slightly pompous, resignedly hen-pecked, and also unsuitably dressed for this climate. He is panting hard. He wears a mourning patch on one sleeve of his jacket

Now Mary enters on to the patio—struggling with three smaller suitcases. She puts them down and gets her breath

As they move into the main area:

George Are you sure they'll let us stay?
Mary Well, George, I haven't broached the subject yet, but they're not barbarians, we're not dealing with your criminal classes, now. The ferry has gone, and won't be returning until tomorrow, and they are surely not going to let us spend the night out there—it looks like the Gobi Desert! (*She glares around the empty area*) If the truth's told, they're probably preparing a room for us now. And, George, I'm warning you—no matter how persuasive they are, we are only staying the one night. Two at the most. Ah!

Mary reacts as:

Suzy and Max enter from the master bedroom—he subtly locking the door behind him

There they are, George.

Suzy and Max start to descend the stairs towards Mary and George

Janet Harrington and . . . er . . .

Max Max.

George How do you do, we've come a long way to find you.

Mary And find you we have. And didn't I tell you, George—she couldn't be anything but a Thripton.

Suzy A Thrip-what?

Max (*suddenly realizing*) A Thripton, darling—remember—*your maiden name*—the name you had *before you became my wife.*

Suzy Oh, a *Thripton*!

Max That explains it then, you're old friends of the family.

Mary No. We *are* the family. Oh, but I don't want to anticipate George's good news.

All eyes turn to George who is a bit bemused

George. The *good news*, George.

George Yes, er . . . um . . . the good news. Um . . . well, it *is* rather a long story . . .

Max Oh, I hope *not* too long.

George This could be to your advantage. *Well*, yes . . .

Suzy and Max sit down

(*He clears his throat several times*) Hum . . . um . . . ha . . . well . . . hum . . . (*A sudden aside to Mary*) Are you sure *you* don't want to tell them, dear?

Mary Oh, do get on with it, George.

George Yes, quite. Well . . . *w—ell.* (*A confident announcement*) In October nineteen twenty-four . . . or was it November . . . ?

Mary *George.*

George Yes, well . . . in October . . . *or* November, nineteen twenty-four, Jonathan, Wilmot, Thripton, left Southampton, on the *SS Luciana*, bound for the port of Buenos Aires. The weather on that day was particularly calm——

Mary (*overriding*) *George*! It's a long story—cut it short!

George Yes—well—to cut a long story short, Jonathan Thripton liked the South Americas so much that he decided to settle there.

Max (*on his feet*) Well, that *is* good news. Terrifically good news. Thank you.

George Oh, but there's more.

Max Oh!

George Jonathan Thripton prospered in those foreign climes—and then, three months ago . . . (*Dramatically he stabs a finger on the black patch on his sleeve*)

Max He tore your jacket?

George *He died.* He died, apparently without an heir. But we know differently, don't we?

Mary Of course they don't know differently! George, *that* is supposed to be what you're explaining! (*She turns to Suzy*) Like you, my dear, I too am a Thripton . . . second cousin to dear Jonathan whom I never met, but I am sure I would have liked! Go on, George.

George Mr Harrington, I am by profession a lawyer.
Mary (*quickly*) And a very good one—despite what his colleagues might say.
George (*drawing breath to continue*) What *do* they say?
Mary Get on with it, George.
George I think I have a right to know—if *people* are talking about me behind my back.
Mary *George.* (*She takes the initiative, and addresses Suzy*) The crux of the matter is that cousin Jonathan died and left some money, and it could be that you and I might be in contention.
Suzy Me?
Mary Well, you are the only other surviving Thripton we've been able to trace . . . and . . . well, I'll let George explain the dreary legal details.
George Do you understand anything about law, Mr Harrington?
Max Not much.
George Then allow me to lead you. There is some money involved here, and two possible beneficiaries. I am a lawyer, Mr Harrington . . . I know the way of these things. Two beneficiaries—*both* with an equal claim—and should they foolishly come into conflict . . . Litigation—claim—counter-claim—it could cost both parties a great deal of time and money——
Max (*interjecting*) You're here to do a deal!
George I am here to explore the possibilities of an out-of-court settlement to the mutual advantage of all interested parties.
Max That's what I said.
Suzy (*overriding*) Max?
Max What?
Suzy Don't you think *I* should go off rowing now?
Max Later, later. (*Back to George*) How much did he leave?
George Well, these things take time, things have to be proven.
Max Hundreds? Thousands? (*A pause*) *Tens* of thousands? Well?
George Millions.
Max Millions!? Millions!? (*Sudden afterthought*) Pounds or dollars!?
George Dollars.
Max Millions of dollars? Millions!?
George (*eagerly*) More than enough for everyone. So we *can* do a deal?

Max pauses, gathers himself, then, the old Max again, he turns to regard George

Max *Second* cousin.
Mary / **George** (*together*) What?
Max Your wife's relationship to Jonathan Thripton . . . second cousin, you say?
George Yes.
Max And my wife's relationship?
George Well, nothing's been established . . .
Max Nevertheless . . .
George Mmm . . . er . . . you're asking me for an opinion . . .

Max But, George. Between relatives.
George Well, I . . . er . . . I'd hate to commit myself . . .
Max Roughly. If *your* wife was his second cousin . . . *my* wife was . . . *what*?
George Well . . . approximately . . . *first*.
Max Approximately?
George The intricacies of the law, a claim such as this, it could take months . . . years even, to definitely prove . . .
Max Well, maybe *we* can speed up the process.
George Eh?
Max (*to Suzy*) I seem to remember lots of dusty old documents relating to you and your family . . . tucked away somewhere. Worth a look, don't you think?
Mary I think it would be best to let George go through them. He'd be pleased to interpret them for you, and wouldn't even *think* of charging a fee.
Max (*overriding*) Oh, I think we can manage. Meanwhile, you'll obviously have to stay the night.
Suzy What?
Max Of course they will, darling, you know there's no ferry until tomorrow morning. You *will* stay the night?
George Just the one night. Two at the most!
Max Excellent. (*He crosses to the open guest bedroom door*) There's a bed made up in here . . .
Mary Well . . . well, that is very kind, but as my husband said . . . just the one night.
Max Let me give you a hand.

Max, George and Mary cross to pick up their various pieces of luggage, and take them towards the guest bedroom. Suzy mouths "What's it all about?" but Max shushes her into silence

Mary I do hope you find those documents, Mr Harrington.
Max I'm sure we shall.
Mary I mean it would be *awful* if they were irretrievably lost . . .
Max No fear of that.
Mary And . . . er . . . don't forget, we will be close at hand, should you wish to consult George about them.

George and Mary exit into the guest bedroom

Suzy (*after the door has closed*) For God's sake! Why did you ask them to stay?
Max Had no alternative, did we?
Suzy And what about *her*!? (*She points upstairs*)
Max She's fast asleep, and will be for most of the day.
Suzy And what when she wakes up?
Max She isn't going to wake up.
Suzy But surely—now *they're* here . . . ?
Max Just trust me, darling.

She regards him. There is a pause

Suzy (*finally*) Well, let's go and get these damned documents then.
Max There aren't any documents!

Suzy reacts

But did you see his reaction when I told him there were!? I'd wager they don't have a legal leg to stand on, and they know it. They're here to try and cheat you out of your inheritance!
Suzy But, Max, it's *Janet's* inheritance!
Max Exactly. And, as far as they are concerned, you are Janet! Trust me, darling—trust me. I have a new plan. A better plan!

The CURTAIN *falls*

SCENE 2

The same. Early that evening

The stage is empty, then the workroom door opens and Max enters, carrying two passports, pursued by Suzy

Suzy Max, it isn't going to work.
Max It is. Look how neatly I've swapped the pictures in these passports. Right down to new plastic sheet and an official stamp.
Suzy (*studying it*) "Chiddingbury Cricket Club"?
Max Only stamp I could find, but it only has to fool the Greek Passport Control, and you know how lax they are. Especially if you're flashing a deep cleavage, which you will be.
Suzy You've darkened Janet's hair down, haven't you?
Max Exactly, now she doesn't look unlike you—about as much as anyone expects from a passport photo. And in this one, I've lightened your hair up . . . so now, officially, she is you—and you are her. And when they find *her* body, they'll find *your* passport along with it, with her picture in it.
Suzy But her hair's blonde.
Max It won't be when I've dyed it.
Suzy I'm confused.
Max Darling, it couldn't *be* more simple. Later tonight, we take Janet out—the new red-headed Janet, carrying *your* passport, with *your* name, and *her* picture . . . darkened down to match her new red hair. OK so far?
Suzy I think so. Why do I have to dye *my* hair?
Max Because, my poppet, as from this moment, *you* are Janet Harrington—and you'll have *her* passport as proof of identity.
Suzy But with *my* picture in it.
Max Right! But her passport describes her as "blonde"—and we can't risk a wig . . . not with this kind of money at stake.
Suzy All right, so I'm using her passport—what next?
Max We go ahead as planned—put her in the boat, push it out to sea . . . *with your passport alongside*—and Suzy Stevens is officially dead. But

Janet Harrington—*you*—heiress to a fortune, and her loving husband—*me*—live happily ever after.

Suzy That's terrific, Max, that's better than we had before!

Max Many millions better. And not a flaw in the whole plan!

Suddenly, we hear the master bedroom door lock rattling

Janet (*off*) Max. Max!

Max and Suzy react

Max The drug must have worn off!

Suzy *What if she wants to see her passport?*

Max Keep calm. Keep out of sight . . . and get me the sugar bowl . . . (*He puts the passports on the table*)

Suzy exits into the workroom

Janet (*off*) Max. Max!

Max All right, darling . . . just coming.

Janet (*off*) I'm locked in!

Max Of course you are.

Suzy enters and hands him the sugar bowl

He pushes her back out of sight. Then, sugar bowl in hand, he starts up the stairs

Coming, my darling. (*He gets to the master bedroom and unlocks the door*)

Janet enters, but remains in the doorway—she is swaying, semi-conscious

Janet Why was I locked in?

Max You . . . had a fall. You . . . you slipped on some seaweed.

Max urges her back into the bedroom and exits into the bedroom with her

Suzy remains, staring up at the bedroom

The guest bedroom opens and George and Mary enter

Mary We've decided to go for a stroll round the island.

George Just a stroll you understand—nothing more.

Mary Absolutely.

George My wife has discussed the matter, and explained to me exactly how I feel. Yes, you'll see no tensions here—no matter what the outcome of this legacy . . . we are utterly sanguine . . .

Mary George . . .

George After all, it's not as though we are desperate for the money . . . oh, no!

Mary *George.*

George No, winner take all is how we see it . . .

Mary *George*! (*Then, sweetly between her teeth*) This is not a case of winners and losers . . . but more an amicable agreement. Or, to put it another way . . . an agreement amicably arrived at.

George Yes. (*Pause*) I'm not sure that is another way of putting it, dear.
Mary Let us go, George.

They are moving to the french doors now

George Ha, ha, ha . . . (*Sotto voce*) Was that carefree enough, d'you think?

Mary *George!*

George and Mary exit through the french doors

Suzy is left very bemused

A moment, then the bedroom door opens, Max enters and hurries downstairs

Max (*as he comes downstairs*) It's all right. I've got her under again. Had to force feed her. (*Then, warily*) Any sign of our guests?
Suzy They've just gone out for a walk.
Max Good. Bring me those bottles from the bench—and a bowl—I'll get on with dyeing her hair red. And we'll blonde yours too while we're about it . . . (*He hurries back up the stairs again*)
Suzy Max——
Max Hurry it up!

Max exits into the master bedroom

Suzy exits into the workroom and then enters a moment later carrying two bottles of dye—she glances around and sees a bowl. She hurries to pick it up

Edgar enters through the french doors, carrying two bottles of ouzo and a boxed orchid

Suzy turns, sees him, reacts with a gasp

Edgar Hallo. Is Max—Mr Harrington—around?
Suzy He . . . he's busy dyeing.
Edgar What?
Suzy Dying to get on with whatever he's busy at.
Edgar That's a pity. I wanted to tell him I know all about the murder now.
Suzy You can't know. How could you know?! We haven't done it yet!
Edgar You!? But I'm the one who's writing the book—it'll be *my* name on the cover. Edgar Chambers.
Suzy You're his neighbour!
Edgar That's right.
Suzy And you know his wife too?!
Edgar Of course.
Suzy (*shrieking*) *Mr Harrington!*
Edgar Oh, don't go disturbing him if he's busy . . .

Max enters from the master bedroom

Max Edgar! What are you doing here? You're supposed to be on the mainland until tomorrow morning. (*He crosses to the gallery, pulls aside the drapes and peers out*)

Edgar (*as he does so*) Had a bit of luck, met a young couple on their way to Corfu–they dropped me off *en route*. (*To Suzy*) By the way, who are you?

Suzy Me? I'm—I'm . . . tell him who I am, darling!

Max A complete stranger. (*He closes the bedroom door and starts down stairs*)

Edgar Eh?

Max (*taking the bowl from Suzy and placing it casually on the drinks cabinet*) Suzy Stevens. She's something to do with theatre—calls everyone "darling", don't you, darling? Now you've got me doing it!

Edgar How did you get here, Miss Stevens?

Max She rowed.

Edgar Rowed?

Suzy Rowed?

Max How else could you have got here? Yes, she rowed. Definitely. To the wrong island.

Edgar The wrong island?

Max Simple enough mistake to make—she had the map upside down. And now she's intent on rowing back.

Suzy I am?

Max (*to Edgar*) You see, foolhardy. (*To Suzy*) Yes, it all becomes clear to me now, you are definitely intent on rowing back today, there is no dissuading her. Despite the many dangers.

Edgar Dangers?

Max A sudden squall.

Edgar I don't know, the sea looks quite calm today.

Max Possibly the calm before the storm . . . and then what? The boat overturning?—pitching her into the merciless ocean? She could be drowned, Edgar, drowned, her lifeless body swept out to sea . . . to be discovered perhaps weeks later. Unrecognizable save for her bright red hair. You have noticed her red hair, Edgar? Of course, it's undeniable . . . yes, I'd wager that in her passport it says, "colour of hair—*red* ". If I were you, Miss Stevens—and don't forget Edgar, her name is *Suzy Stevens*, if I were you, I should carry your passport with you always. It could be the only means of identifying you. No matter how soggy it gets.

Edgar She could always wait for the ferry tomorrow.

Max (*throwing up a hand*) No. She is adamant, and quite determined to make that perilous journey. The best I have been able to do is persuade her to leave now.

Suzy What?!

Max *Now*. Before the light fails, and while Edgar is *still here to witness your departure*. All that remains is to see if the coast is clear. (*He strides out on to the patio and stares off, then he returns*) There's no sign of them.

Edgar Them?

Max The cirrus nimbus cloud formation that often heralds a storm. Yes, Miss Stevens. Here is your passport, take it, and make your run to the boat now. (*He hands her a passport from the table*)

Suzy B—But——

Max Those cirrus nimbus are not visible yet, but might be upon us any moment—just go, and stay out of sight of them.

Max urges Suzy to exit through the french doors

Suzy exits

Now, Edgar . . .

Edgar You've given me a grand idea for a murder, Max.

Max I'm delighted.

Edgar A drowning, a switch of personality perhaps . . . it's all mixed up in my mind at the moment, but it'll come clear to me.

Max (*trying to get Edgar to leave*) Good, good. You should go straight back to your place, lock the door and burn the midnight oil . . . and emerge in a few days time—*but certainly no earlier than tomorrow afternoon.*

Edgar That's good advice. I'll do that . . . (*He seems about to go—then*) Ah, but I was forgetting . . . provisions . . . (*he returns to the table*) . . . and I replaced some of the ouzo I've drunk here. *And* I brought a little something for Janet . . . (*He picks up the orchid*) Where is Janet by the way?

Max She's lying down upstairs.

Edgar I don't wonder—all that rowing.

Max Rowing? Janet? She never goes rowing.

Edgar Eh?

Max No, it's *Suzy Stevens* who goes rowing. You remember Suzy Stevens? The *red-haired* girl?

Edgar But I thought you said——

Max I said—and you agreed—that you should go back to your place and get to work.

Edgar Ay. Ay.

As Max urges him to the french doors

That drowning. I think the motive could be something to do with a will.

Max (*with the faintest hesitation*) Corny, Edgar, corny. You can do better than that—back at your place, *with the drapes drawn against the outside world.*

Suzy enters through the french doors

Suzy I nearly ran into them!

Max What?

Suzy Cirrus nimbus. Coming across the headland. *And hurrying.*

Edgar I'd better go then. I don't want to get caught in the rain.

Max Go? I wouldn't hear of it. You'll disappoint Janet.

Edgar Janet?

Max Yes, if you went to the trouble of buying this, I *insist* that you give it to her personally. (*He thrusts the orchid into Edgar's hands*) Go on, Edgar, the door at the top of the stairs.

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