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Beyond A Joke

A Comedy

Derek Benfield

Samuel French – London
New York – Sydney – Toronto – Hollywood



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BEYOND A JOKE

First presented by Newpalm Productions on a national tour following a summer season at The Shanklin Theatre, Isle of Wight, which opened on July 2nd 1979 with the following cast of characters:

Jane	Honor Shepherd
Andrew	Arthur Lowe
Geoff	Peter Greene
Sally	Annette Woollett
Sarah	Joan Cooper
Vicar	Vyvian Hall
Audrey	Jane Elliott
Edgar	Brian Tully

The play directed by Christopher Bond

Setting by Kenneth Turner

The action takes place in the drawing-room and part of the garden of Andrew and Jane's detached house in the country

It is summertime and the going is easy

ACT I

SCENE 1 Friday evening

SCENE 2 Saturday morning

ACT II

SCENE 1 A few seconds later

SCENE 2 After lunch the same day

Time—the present

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(See also page ii)

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ACT I

SCENE 1

The drawing-room and part of the garden of Andrew and Jane's detached house in the country. A Friday evening in summer: the sun is shining

In the drawing-room an archway leads out into the hall and the rest of the house, and there is a cupboard DR with a small armchair in front of it. A two-seater sofa stands centrally, with a coffee table below it and a well-stocked drinks table above it. Against the wall immediately above the sofa is a handsome desk with a telephone on it and bookshelves around it. The furniture and decoration show the presence of both money and good taste. There is a window, with practical curtains, in the central wall with a window seat inside. An open glass door above the window leads out to the garden, where there is a splendid red brick wall and an abundance of shrubs and bright flowers. There is a way off which leads "up the garden" and round to the front of the house, and another which leads "down the garden" and to the pond. A wooden seat stands in the middle of the garden with a table below it, and there is a garden chair DC. A ladder is in position against the side of the house, with a bucket of water at its foot. The whole atmosphere is of a dreamy, peaceful, bee-buzzing English country garden. (See plan of set, page 81)

Jane comes into the garden from the front of the house, putting on her rubber kitchen gloves. She is an attractive woman of about forty-seven, wearing slacks and a shirt. She takes a wash-leather out of the bucket, squeezes out the surplus water and looks apprehensively up the ladder. Then she starts to climb, carefully and not too confidently

Andrew's voice is heard from the hall

Andrew (off) Jane! Jane!

Oblivious, Jane continues to climb slowly

Andrew walks in from the hall into the drawing-room. He has just got home from work in the City. He is a pleasant, relaxed man in his middle-fifties. He wears a business suit and carries the evening paper and a brief-case. He puts them down and looks about. He sees the ladder outside, looks puzzled and goes out into the garden. He sees Jane going up the ladder and watches her for a moment in silence

(Eventually) Jane!

Jane reacts and nearly falls

What on earth are you doing up there?

Jane Really, Andrew! Creeping up and surprising me like that. I might have fallen off.

Andrew I didn't expect to find you up a ladder.

Jane Why not?

Andrew Well, I don't usually come home on a Friday night and find you up a ladder. Not what I'm used to.

Jane (*looking up at the windows*) You shouldn't get so set in your ways.

A brief pause

Andrew Any special reason?

Jane What?

Andrew Look, I can't talk to you up there. For heaven's sake come down.

Jane I'm not sure if I can.

Andrew Oh, my God! (*He starts to go inside*)

Jane Where are you going?

Andrew To call the Fire Brigade.

Jane Darling. I'm only up a ladder.

Andrew Long way down.

Jane Don't be silly. I'm only halfway up.

Andrew So if you fall you'll only break *half* a leg, is that it? You know perfectly well that in this house someone has only to trip over the edge of the carpet and they seem to break their neck.

Jane slips

Jane Ooh!

Andrew Are you all right?

Jane Yes. I think so.

Andrew wanders to the garden chair

Andrew That's all I need. Come home from work and find my wife lying dead in the garden.

Jane I'm not dead *yet*.

Andrew You're not *down* yet, either. (*He sits on the garden chair*) What on earth were you doing?

Jane I was going to clean the windows.

Andrew What for?

Jane Because the garden looks so lovely from our bedroom window at this time of the year. (*Romantically*) All the phlox and hollyhocks, and those nice blue flowers like bells all along the edge . . .

Andrew Darling . . .

Jane Yes?

Andrew Wouldn't it have been easier to get a window-cleaner?

Jane (*ominously*) Ah. Well . . .

Andrew looks apprehensive

Andrew Don't tell me something's happened to the window-cleaner?

Jane He wouldn't come.

Andrew Why not?

Jane Well—I suppose he must have *heard*.

Andrew Heard?

Jane About what happened to the last one.

Andrew Oh, no . . .

Jane Oh, yes! I think I'll try to come down now.

Andrew goes to the foot of the ladder

Andrew Wait a minute! I'll come up and help you.

Jane Then we'd *both* fall.

Andrew If we're going to go—let's go together!

Jane Don't be silly, Andrew. It's only a few steps.

Andrew Rungs, darling.

Jane Sorry?

Andrew Rungs in ladders. Steps in stairs.

Jane Oh, yes. (*She starts to come down*)

Andrew Hang on! I'll get some cushions in case you fall.

Jane I'm half-way down already.

Andrew (*admiringly*) Good lord. So you are. How splendid!

She reaches the ground and he embraces her delightedly

There! You made it! I'm proud of you.

Jane (*laughing*) I'm not a sherpa coming down from Everest, you know.

Andrew It's just as dangerous. With the track record in this house you need a seat belt to go to the lavatory. (*He sits on the garden seat*) How on earth did he find out?

Jane Who?

Andrew The new window-cleaner. About the old one.

Jane Oh, you know how people talk. I expect he heard it on the grapevine. (*She takes off her rubber gloves*)

Andrew I didn't know window-cleaners had grapevines.

Jane You could hardly expect his wife not to mention it. If your husband falls off a ladder and breaks his neck, it's bound to come up in the conversation.

Andrew Well, it wasn't *my* fault. I was at work. Can't spend all day holding ladders for window-cleaners.

Jane (*thoughtfully*) I expect they've put a secret sign on the gatepost.

Andrew looks at her bemusedly

Like those old tramps in Saltash, do you remember? They always knew where to go for bread-and-jam and fresh tea.

Andrew What are you talking about?

Jane I expect that's how they knew not to come *here* . . .

Andrew Tramps?

Jane Window-cleaners.

Andrew You mean there's some sort of squiggle on our gate somewhere that means "Stay away if you want to stay alive"?

Jane Wouldn't be surprised.

Andrew Well, I think that's very unfair. Sam was the only window-cleaner who ever died in this house. The only one! That won't get us into the *Guinness Book of Records*, will it?

Jane Not if you don't include the *others*.

Andrew sighs regretfully

Andrew Well, it's not my fault. We've just got an unlucky house. (*He tries to cheer up*) Come on—I want a drink.

They go into the house. Andrew sees to the drinks

Gin and tonic for you?

Jane H'm. Lovely. (*She glances at the evening paper that Andrew brought in with him*) By the way—Sylvia rang this morning.

Andrew Sylvia?

Jane Of Sylvia and George.

Andrew Oh, yes?

Jane They were coming to dinner tomorrow.

Andrew Were they?

Jane You'd forgotten.

Andrew Completely.

Jane Well, it doesn't matter because they've changed their minds and now they're not.

Andrew Well, I think that's rather rude. (*He hands her a drink*) There you are.

Jane Thank you, darling.

He goes back to see to his own drink

Andrew Why not?

Jane They can't get a baby-sitter. (*She sits on the window-seat with the newspaper*)

Andrew What on earth do they want with a baby-sitter? They've only got one child and he works in the Foreign Office.

Jane Dogs.

Andrew Ah. Dog-sitter. That's never bothered them before.

Jane No. I thought it was a pretty feeble excuse.

Andrew You think they were *looking* for an excuse?

Jane Well, I asked them to change to *next* Saturday. Or the following Wednesday, Friday or Sunday.

Andrew And they couldn't manage *any* of those?

Jane Fully booked.

Andrew Don't be silly, darling. Sylvia and George are never fully booked. They only go out twice a year. They're terrified of being out the night there's something good on television. (*He sits on the sofa*)

Jane Perhaps they didn't *want* to come.

He looks at her

Andrew Good lord. You don't suppose they . . . ? Oh, no, they couldn't have done, could they?

Jane Got to know about our wretched accidents?

Andrew It's bound to put people off a bit if they do find out. You haven't mentioned any of them to Sylvia?

Jane looks a little guilty

Jane Well—I might have mentioned one or two.

Andrew Well, there you are. That's why they're not coming to dinner.

Jane I didn't think.

Andrew (*gently*) Look, darling, even one or two fatal accidents are bound to tip the balance when it comes to dinner parties. I expect Sylvia has got the idea that we're accident-prone.

Jane Well, you can't blame her. It *is* beginning to look like it.

Andrew So she probably thinks that if she brings George to dinner he'll choke on an avocado pear.

Jane Well, I'm not going to leave the stones in, am I?

Andrew relaxes on the sofa with his drink. He sighs heavily

Andrew It is a bit depressing, isn't it?

Jane You must try not to think about it. (*She glances idly through the evening paper*)

Andrew Not very easy. I mean, after all, how many is it now? Five?

Jane Six.

Andrew Six? Good lord. Becoming embarrassing.

Jane Darling, you mustn't worry. It could happen to anybody.

Andrew Yes, but it *has* happened to us! I'm afraid to ask anyone home for a drink in case something happens to them.

Jane Well, at least it hasn't happened to any of our friends.

Andrew No. That's some consolation. (*Thoughtfully*) Good lord. Six. . . .

She goes and sits next to him, puts down the newspaper and kisses him cosily on the top of the head

That's very nice. Any special reason?

Jane No. Just felt like it.

Andrew I see.

A cosy pause—both thinking

I suppose Geoff's coming for the week-end again?

Jane smiles at the slight disapproval in his voice

Jane He hasn't said not.

Andrew Becoming a bit of a habit.

Jane H'm.

Andrew grunts and sips his gin

Andrew Anyhow—let's hope he's got some good news for us.

Jane What about?

Andrew Oh, I just thought perhaps he might have got that job in West Hartlepool.

Jane Good heavens. I'd forgotten all about that.

Andrew I hadn't.

Jane Sally wouldn't see so much of him then.

Andrew pretends he had not thought of that

Andrew Oh, dear. That would be a shame.

Jane (with an amused smile) You've never really liked Geoff very much, have you?

Andrew Well, I . . . Haven't I? I can't think how she got to know him in the first place.

Jane You know perfectly well. He was a pen-friend.

Andrew A pen-friend? He comes from Stoke Poges.

Jane What's that got to do with it?

Andrew Other men's daughters have pen-friends in Biarritz or Bermuda.

Mine has to pick one from Stokes Poges.

Jane Sally always was bad at geography.

Andrew Sorry?

Jane She thought that Stoke Poges was in the Seychelles.

Andrew Anyhow, if he's a pen-friend what's he doing spending weekends with us? Pen-friends are supposed to write to you, not stay with you.

Jane It's nice for him to relax on a Saturday and Sunday.

Andrew Why does he have to do it in *my* house?

Jane He works hard all the week.

Andrew Oh, does he? I didn't know he worked at all. What does he do?

Jane He's training to be a gardener.

Andrew Going to spend all his time planting cabbages?

Jane And he's looking for a house in London.

Andrew He'll have to plant a few cabbages to pay for that!

Jane Don't be silly, darling. They'll be sharing it with four others.

Andrew Four other cabbages?

Jane No, you idiot! Four other people.

Andrew Oh, I see. A commune.

Jane It's the *in* thing these days.

Andrew Does that mean that Sally's going to go and live with him?

Jane Wouldn't be surprised.

Andrew Good lord . . .

Jane He'll probably mention it to you one of these days during dinner.

Andrew I sincerely hope he doesn't. Otherwise *I'll* be the one choking on the avocado!

She laughs and hits him affectionately with the newspaper

Geoff appears in the garden. He is a good-looking young man, carrying a week-end grip

Andrew and Jane do not notice him. He sees the ladder leaning against the wall and looks puzzled. He goes nearer to it and looks up at the top of it

Want another drink?

Jane Not for me, thanks. I must go and see about the dinner.

Andrew (*rising*) Well, I think I'll just top mine up a bit.

Outside Geoff glances around to make sure he is alone and then puts down his bag and begins to go up the ladder. Inside, Jane sees him and reacts slowly, peering with disbelief into the garden

Jane Good heavens . . . There's a man outside climbing up our ladder.

Andrew (*hopefully*) Aah! Perhaps your window cleaner's turned up, after all.

Jane No! It's Geoff!

Andrew (*without enthusiasm*) Oh, God! (*He pours a larger drink*)

Jane goes quickly out into the garden. Andrew follows with his gin. They peer up at the slowly climbing figure

Jane (*eventually*) Geoff!

Geoff reacts and nearly falls

What on earth are you doing up there?

Geoff (*smiling feebly*) Oh, hullo. I say, it's a lovely view of the garden!

Andrew and Jane exchange a look

Jane Yes, it is, isn't it?

Geoff (*enthusiastically*) You can see it all from up here, you know. Phlox, and hollyhocks, and those nice yellow daisy things with red middles.

Andrew Gaillardias.

Geoff Is that what they're called?

Andrew (*moving to Jane*) Thought he was training to be a gardener.

Yellow daisy things with red middles . . .

Geoff You know, I've never been up a ladder before! (*He beams with joy as he surveys the garden*)

Jane (*anxiously*) Well, do hold on, Geoff. We don't want you to go and fall. Do we, Andrew?

Andrew What?

She gives him a look

Oh, no. No, we don't want that.

Geoff (*enthusiastically*) You know, I rather like being up a ladder!

Andrew You should join the Fire Brigade.

Jane (*anxiously*) I do think you ought to come down now, Geoff. I mean—it is rather dangerous up there and accidents do happen.

Andrew They certainly do. Especially in this house.

Geoff Oh—all right, then. (*He slips and nearly falls*) Oooh!

Jane (*alarmed*) Are you all right?

Geoff Yes. I think so. Here I come. (*He starts to come down the ladder*)

Jane Now remember—one step at a time.

Andrew Rungs, darling.

Jane What?

Andrew One rung at a time.

Jane Oh, yes. Rungs.

Geoff arrives safely on terra firma, exhilarated by his experience

Geoff It's wonderful up there! Beautiful view. You should try it sometime.

Andrew She did.

Geoff What?

Andrew Yes. Up the ladder.

Geoff (*to Jane*) You went up the ladder?

Jane Well, I'd given up the window-cleaner.

Geoff Oh? Is this *his* ladder?

Andrew No, no. It's *our* ladder. We've got a ladder, you see, but no window-cleaner. Very aggravating. Well! You got down for the week-end again, then?

Geoff (*nervously*) Yes, rather! As a matter of fact I—er—I specially wanted to be here this week-end. Got something to talk to you about.

Andrew Got some news for us?

Geoff Yes.

Andrew Good news?

Geoff I hope so.

Andrew (*smiling*) You're going to West Hartlepool?

Geoff (*puzzled*) What?

Andrew (*his face falling*) You're *not* going to West Hartlepool?

Geoff Well, it wasn't that exactly.

Andrew Nothing to do with West Hartlepool?

Geoff No.

Andrew What a pity. (*He sits on the garden chair*)

Geoff It—it wasn't about work, as a matter of fact.

Andrew Oh. About something else, was it?

Geoff smiles nervously

Geoff Yes. I've found a house!

Jane (*delightedly*) Geoff!

Geoff With some friends of mine.

Jane Oh, that *is* exciting! (*She sits on the garden seat*) Did you hear that, Andrew? Geoff's found a house with some friends of his. Isn't that wonderful?

Andrew Wonderful. Now I suppose the price of cabbages will go up.

Geoff What?

Andrew Nothing.

Geoff (*gaining confidence*) Of course, there's a lot to be done. Some of the walls are collapsing a bit. They'll have to be made good. Well—you know how it is.

Andrew Do we? (*He exchanges a look with Jane*)

Geoff And then the plumbing leaves a bit to be desired, but Peter's good with pipes so that's all right. Then, of course, the whole place needs to be redecorated.

Andrew Well that should keep you busy at the week-ends.

Jane gives him a stern look

Jane That really *is* good news, Geoff. I'm so glad.

Andrew Was that what you wanted to tell us?

Geoff loses confidence again

Geoff Well—no, . . . not *just* that.

Andrew rises ominously

Andrew Something else, was it?

Geoff Yes.

Andrew Well? (*Pause*) Well, what was it? (*Pause*) You haven't forgotten already, have you?

Geoff Oh, no! No. I was just. . . .

Jane Plucking up courage?

Geoff Yes.

Andrew looks at him suspiciously

Andrew Needs plucking up, does it?

Geoff Well—just a little, yes. A couple of notches. It's—it's about Sally.

Andrew (*heavily*) About Sally, is it?

Geoff (*nodding nervously*) Yes.

Andrew I see. (*Moving to Jane*) We're not having avocados tonight, are we?

Jane giggles. Andrew sits beside her. Geoff looks puzzled

Geoff Sorry?

Andrew (*to Geoff*) Just a little in-joke with my wife.

Geoff Oh . . .

Jane (*tactfully*) Well, I think I'll leave you two men alone to talk about things . . . (*She starts to go*)

Andrew Oh, no, you won't! (*He catches her arm and pulls her back again*) If he's got something to say to me about Sally he can wait till after dinner. I'd rather face it on a full stomach.

Geoff Oh, well, in that case I'll go. (*He starts to go*)

Andrew (*hopefully*) For good?

Geoff stops and turns

Geoff Upstairs.

Andrew Ah.

Geoff To freshen up.

Andrew Good idea. You know which room you're in, don't you?

Geoff Yes, thanks.

Andrew You should do by now.

Jane (*quietly*) Andrew . . . !

Geoff Right. I'll see you both later on, then.

Andrew More than likely, yes.

Jane And Geoff—congratulations!

Geoff What?

Jane About the house.

Geoff Oh, that. Yes. Right. Thanks.

*Geoff, smiling nervously, stumbles off into the house and out into the hall
Jane crosses behind the seat, watching Geoff go*

Jane Really, Andrew! You didn't make it very easy for him.

Andrew Why should I? If Sally's going to live with him and Peter and three or four other people in a collapsing house with no plumbing I intend to make things as difficult as possible for him.

Jane But he's such a nice young man. If he worked at your bank you'd be delighted.

Andrew I'd be surprised.

Jane is about to leave, but remembers something

Jane By the way—you'll never guess who rang today.

Andrew Really?

Jane Well—go on.

Andrew What?

Jane Guess.

Andrew You just said I'd never guess.

Jane Well try.

Andrew I haven't the remotest idea.

Jane The Vicar.

Andrew You were right. I'd never have guessed. You mean the . . . ? *(He mimes a clerical collar and puts his hands together in prayer)*

Jane Yes.

Andrew Vicar?

Jane Yes. He wants to come to tea.

Andrew *Here?*

Jane Yes.

Andrew Good heavens. What on earth does he want to come to tea *here* for?

Jane He's new to the village.

Andrew That's no excuse.

Jane Oh, Andrew . . . ! *(She laughs reprovingly)*

Inside, Geoff appears from the hall, having left his week-end grip in the garden. He heads for the garden but pauses to look at something that catches his eye in the newspaper

Jane I expect he's visiting all his parishioners. Trying to get to know them. I expect he's keen.

Andrew Oh, is he? We'll soon put a stop to that.

Andrew rises, puts his glass down and drifts thoughtfully across the garden

Jane (*a sudden thought*) Good heavens . . .!

Andrew What?

Jane You don't suppose he heard that the window-cleaner came here and didn't get away alive?

Inside, Geoff looks up from the newspaper, somewhat surprised by the remark he has just overheard

Andrew I sincerely hope not.

Jane (*moving closer to Andrew*) Perhaps that's what he wants to talk to us about.

Andrew About the window-cleaner?

Jane Yes.

Andrew Now, wait a minute. If he *had* heard about what happened to the window-cleaner he wouldn't want to come here himself, would he?

Jane Too risky, you mean?

Andrew Well, yes, of course. (*He sits thoughtfully on the garden chair*) Mind you. Let's be fair. We've never had a vicar done to death here before, have we?

Geoff now looks distinctly alarmed. He edges nearer to the garden door, listening intently

Jane No, and I certainly hope we're not going to start now.

Andrew You can't be sure. Ask a vicar to tea—*anything* could happen.

H'm. A bit too risky, I'd say . . .

Jane For him?

Andrew No, no—for *us*! With our luck we'd never get away with it.

Geoff's alarm is increasing. He cannot believe his ears. He peers nervously out of the door into the garden

Jane Does seem a shame, though. He was awfully keen to come. I think we *will* have to do it some time, Andrew.

A pause. Andrew thinks for a moment, then makes a decision and slaps his knee decisively

Andrew All right. Let's do it! Get it over with. And if the worst comes to the worst we must be quite sure that nobody finds out. They're very fond of vicars in this village, and if he came here and kicked the bucket they'd never let us hear the last of it.

Jane We'll just have to be very careful, that's all, darling. I'll give him a ring in the morning and ask him to tea. (*She looks at her watch*) Good heavens! I'd better go and see about dinner.

Jane runs into the house, passing Geoff on her way. He is pale and still. Andrew returns to the seat—and his gin

(*Cheerfully*) Hullo, Geoff! Have a good wash? (*She disappears into the hall*)

Geoff looks apprehensively at Andrew. Andrew settles himself comfortably

on the garden seat, enjoying the pleasant evening sunshine. Geoff hovers nervously

Geoff Oh. Sorry.

Andrew H'm?

Geoff I left my. . . .

Andrew looks up

Andrew What?

Geoff Things.

Andrew Oh. Yes.

Andrew leans back and closes his eyes. Geoff goes to collect his bag

Have a good wash?

Geoff Er—not yet. (*He returns to the garden seat with his bag*)

Andrew Never mind. Plenty of time. We shan't be eating for ages. Perhaps you'd like a drink? You look as if you could do with one.

Geoff I—I don't.

Andrew opens his eyes

Andrew What?

Geoff Drink.

Andrew Good lord . . .

Geoff Apple juice.

Andrew What?

Geoff That's what I drink. Apple juice.

Andrew I don't think we've got any of that. (*He closes his eyes again*)

Geoff hovers. He puts down his bag and goes to Andrew again

Geoff I've got a confession to make.

Andrew Yes, I know. You've found a house.

Geoff No, no. Not that. (*Emphatically*) I didn't have my wash!

Andrew Nothing to get excited about.

Geoff I came downstairs to get my things—but I didn't come straight out here!

Andrew looks at him for a moment, unable to understand Geoff's vehemence over such trivia

Andrew Is this important?

Geoff (*strongly*) I stood for some time in the sitting-room!

Andrew You needn't have done that. There are plenty of chairs in there.

Geoff The point is—I heard what you were saying about the Vicar!

No reaction from Andrew. He is enjoying the warmth of the sunshine

Andrew Oh, that. Yes. (*He chuckles*) He wants to come to tea.

Geoff (*anxiously*) Are you going to let him?

Andrew Probably. Yes. After all, he's new to the parish.

Geoff You're not really going to *do* it, though, are you?

Andrew (*dreamily*) Do what?

Geoff Kill the Vicar off!

Andrew Well, that rather depends.

Geoff Depends on what?

Andrew On whether he's a lucky vicar or an unlucky vicar.

Geoff And if he's *unlucky*?

Andrew Too bad.

Geoff Oh, my God! (*He moves away, appalled*)

Andrew (*wearily*) Did you *have* to listen in to all that? *I* don't like it any more than *you* do . . . (*He sips his gin wretchedly*) And anyhow—he did invite himself. We didn't invite him.

Geoff Well, you'll have to put him off!

Jane enters from the hall and heads for the garden

Andrew You know, it's a pity you spent so long standing in the sitting-room. You would never have known about this. (*Kindly*) Look, Geoff—you needn't worry. It may never happen.

Geoff But if it does?

Andrew (*confidently*) Well, I expect the Curate's quite capable of managing on his own.

Geoff sinks in despair on to the garden chair. Jane comes out into the garden

Jane Leeks out of the garden! Isn't that exciting? (*She sees Geoff's face*) Geoff, are you all right?

Andrew He's been skulking in the sitting-room listening to our conversation.

Jane Which part?

Andrew The part about the Vicar.

Jane Oh, really, Geoff! You shouldn't have listened. That was a private conversation. Anyway, I wouldn't worry about it. It may never happen.

Geoff (*desperately*) But you're asking him to tea!

Jane (*reasonably*) Well, it was his *idea*.

Geoff rises in a state of great agitation

Geoff Then you'll have to put him off!

Jane Oh, I don't think I can do that. It would be awfully rude. (*She sits beside Andrew on the garden seat*)

Geoff You don't seem to understand—I heard what you said! You're going to kill him!

Andrew (*beginning to get rattled*) Look, you can't blame *us* if something happens to the Vicar.

Jane And *you're* the one who doesn't seem to understand—

Geoff He's going to die right here in this house!

Andrew Not necessarily. It doesn't happen to *everyone* who comes to visit, you know. Otherwise, it would be impossible to get a four for bridge.

Andrew and Jane are amused by this. Geoff is not

Geoff Oh, my God! (*He turns away from them*)

Andrew and Jane exchange a look, then Andrew turns again to Geoff

Andrew Now, look here—whenever this sort of thing happens, it's deeply embarrassing for us. I hope you realize that.

Geoff looks at him with fearful apprehension

Geoff You—you don't mean—you don't mean that this sort of thing—has happened *before*?

Andrew looks at Jane. She gives a helpless shrug. He turns back to Geoff

Andrew (*with a great effort*) Well—yes, as a matter of fact. I'm afraid it has.

A pause. Geoff is frozen

Geoff Often?

Andrew Fairly often.

Geoff How often?

Andrew Well, if you must know—(*with difficulty*)—six times.

Geoff (*appalled*) Six!

Andrew I'm afraid so. (*He rises with his empty glass to above the garden seat*) Now you can see why we don't want people to know about it, can't you?

Geoff Yes, I certainly can!

Jane We've even thought of moving away from here.

Geoff (*suspiciously*) To get away from it all?

Andrew Yes. We thought perhaps we ought to go to another house. Start all over again.

Geoff What?!

Andrew In the hope that perhaps next time we'll be a little luckier.

Geoff (*wildly*) You seem to have been pretty lucky up to now!

Andrew What do you mean?

Geoff Well—after all—nothing's happened to *you*, has it? I mean, you've never been to prison, have you?

Andrew (*puzzled*) To prison?

Geoff Yes! To prison!

Andrew and Jane look bewildered

Andrew Er—no. Should I have?

Geoff (*heavily*) Well, *some* people might think so!

A pause

Andrew (*to Jane*) I think I need some more gin. How about you? (*He goes towards the house*)

Jane No, thanks. I really must get on with the dinner. You mustn't worry about it, you know, Geoff. It could happen to anyone. (*She follows Andrew inside*)

Andrew Funny chap . . .

Jane H'm?

Andrew What's all this about me being a prison visitor?

Jane Perhaps he thought you looked the type.

Andrew Extraordinary. (*He starts to pour himself a drink*)

Geoff comes in quickly from the garden

Geoff Who *were* they?

Andrew Who?

Geoff The six!

Jane Do you really want to know?

Geoff Yes! I do!

Jane looks at Andrew resignedly

Andrew (*with difficulty*) Oh—er—well—let's see now. There was the little man who read the gas meter. What was his name, darling?

Jane Mr Merry.

Andrew (*amused in spite of everything*) Was it really?

Jane Yes. Percy Merry.

Andrew Percy Merry! Good lord . . . (*He chuckles*)

Geoff What happened to him?

Andrew Ah—well, you see—the gas meter's in the cellar here. Down a long flight of stone steps. (*He sits on the sofa*)

Jane I warned him they were rather steep three or four times, but he never seemed to pay any attention.

Andrew Then one day—they must have been very slippery or something.

Geoff (*fearfully*) And Mr Merry?

Andrew Wasn't merry any more.

Geoff He—fell?

Andrew Apparently. Must have gone down that flight of steps like a bob-sleigh champion.

Geoff So what did they do about it?

Andrew Who?

Geoff The authorities!

Andrew Nothing very much. We've had our gas bills estimated ever since.

Jane perches on the arm of the sofa

Jane Then there was the window-cleaner . . .

Geoff (*wildly*) Fell off his ladder, I suppose?

Andrew How did *you* know?

Geoff I guessed!

Jane Some of the steps were wonky.

Andrew Rungs, darling.

Jane What?

Andrew Rungs in ladders. Steps in stairs.

Jane Oh, yes.

Geoff moves wildly round to Andrew

Geoff And nobody came to see you about it? To ask you questions?

Andrew Very little point, really. He was dead all right.

Geoff Oh, my God! I need a drink. *(He subsides into the armchair)*

Andrew *(to Jane)* Got any apple juice?

Geoff Something stronger!

Andrew I'll get you a whisky. *(He goes to get a whisky)*

Geoff I just can't believe it. Six already and the Vicar on the way! If you go on like this you'll soon be into double figures. *(He looks at Jane)*
You're taking this very calmly.

Jane Well, there's nothing else we can do. We don't seem to be able to stop it.

Andrew *(arriving with the whisky)* Whisky!

Geoff Thanks.

Andrew Better than apple juice. *(He chuckles, looking at Geoff)*

Geoff takes the glass and is about to drink it, but hesitates and looks at Andrew suspiciously

Something wrong?

Geoff I'm not sure . . .

Andrew takes the glass, sniffs at it, starts to hand it back to Geoff but changes his mind, takes a sip and hands it back

Andrew Very good.

Reassured, Geoff downs the whisky in one

I thought you weren't used to whisky.

Geoff It's dreadful . . .!

Andrew It shouldn't be at that price!

Geoff No, no! Not the drink! The—the *other* business . . .

Andrew Oh, that. Yes. Yes, I suppose it is, isn't it? *(Moving to the window seat)* All the same, I think you should try to be a bit more sympathetic. After all, it isn't *our* fault.

Geoff Then whose fault is it?

Jane *(reasonably)* It isn't anybody's fault, Geoff. I suppose it's just—well, I dunno—something about this house.

But Geoff is sunk in gloom, a long way from reassurance

Sally comes in from the hall, having arrived home from work. She is a pretty, vivacious girl of about twenty

Andrew Oh, hullo darling. *(They kiss briefly)*

Sally I say, Daddy—did you know there's a ladder leaning against the side of the house?

Andrew Yes. We're trying to tempt a passing window cleaner. Had a hard day behind your typewriter?

Sally Yes. I'm exhausted. Mr Gledhill always starts dictating letters at twenty-five past five. I could kill him.

Andrew Don't do that! We have enough problems.

Sally looks across at Geoff

Sally Hullo, you!

Geoff does not react

Is he asleep?

Andrew No. Thinking.

Sally Geoff. . . .

Still no reaction. Sally goes to Jane and kisses her briefly

Hullo, Mummy.

Jane Hullo, darling.

Sally I had lunch with Hilary today.

Jane Oh, good. I haven't seen her for ages. Is she still mad about riding?

Sally H'm. I might pop over to their place sometime tomorrow. They've got a new horse.

Andrew I didn't know they'd eaten the last one yet.

Sally looks at him pityingly. Andrew looks a little shamefaced

Sally Daddy, that really is one of your worst.

Andrew Yes, I know. I'm sorry.

Sally (to Jane) I don't know how you live with this man.

Jane I've got no choice. He owns the house.

Sally looks at Geoff again

Sally Is he all right?

Andrew Bit moody.

Sally You haven't said anything to upset him, have you? (*She goes across to Geoff*)

Andrew and Jane exchange a furtive glance

Geoff!

Geoff comes to at last

Geoff Oh! Hullo, Sal . . .

Sally You were miles away.

Geoff (*miserably*) I wish I was!

Sally What?

Geoff I mean yes, I was. I was dreaming.

Sally (*seeing his glass*) Have you been drinking?

Geoff (*miles away*) No. I've got one, thanks.

Sally It's empty.

Geoff (*coming to*) Oh—yes, so it is.

Sally Would you like another?

Geoff Definitely!

Sally looks surprised

Andrew (*taking the glass*) I'll do that. (*He goes to see to the drink*)

Geoff (*alarmed*) No! Don't you bother!

Sally (*surprised*) He can manage to pour a drink, you know. He's had plenty of practice. (*She grins at Andrew*)

Andrew *(to Sally)* Sherry for you?

Sally Yes, please.

Andrew sees to the drinks

(To Geoff) Would you like to go out into the garden?

Geoff *(nervously)* Why? What's happened?

Sally smiles at Geoff patiently

Sally Nothing's happened. It's just a lovely evening, that's all. I thought we could have our drinks out there. It's so romantic.

But Geoff looks far from romantic. Sally looks at Jane and shrugs. Andrew arrives with a sherry for Sally and a whisky for Geoff

Andrew *(to Sally)* Right then, here's yours.

Sally Thanks, Daddy. *(She takes it)*

Andrew *(to Geoff)* And here's yours. . . .

Geoff takes the whisky and is about to drink some of it when Andrew starts to chuckle. Geoff stops, his drink poised, and looks at Andrew

It's not out of the same decanter.

Geoff *(apprehensively)* Oh, my God . . . !

Geoff abruptly holds out the whisky to Andrew. Andrew smiles happily, and takes the glass. He takes a sip of it and, acting as if poisoned, falls back on to the sofa and beats it with one hand. Jane and Sally watch with amusement. Finally, Andrew gets to his feet with a grin and hands the drink back to the embarrassed Geoff

(Abruptly) Thanks.

Andrew Don't mention it. I always wanted to be a whisky taster. *(He moves away to Jane with a grin and sits on the sofa)*

Sally turns to Geoff

Sally Whisky? Are you drinking whisky? You don't usually.

Geoff I'm trying to calm my nerves.

Sally What are you nervous about?

Andrew All that money he's going to lay out, I should think.

Sally What money?

Jane Haven't you heard the news? Hasn't he told you the news?

Sally Has he *got* some news?

Andrew Yes. He certainly has.

Sally He's not going to West Hartlepool, is he?

Andrew No. I'm afraid not.

Jane He's found a house.

Sally *(delightedly)* He *hasn't*!

Jane Yes, he has.

Sally A house?

Andrew Yes. And when the walls are built and the pipes are laid, it's going to sleep about forty-seven.

Sally A house?

Andrew Well, they had to call it *something*.

Sally turns excitedly to Geoff

Sally You've found a house! (*Geoff is too deep in gloom to reply*) He's found a house!

Andrew Don't *keep* saying it.

Jane Isn't it wonderful?

Sally Terrific! (*To Geoff*) Why are you looking so miserable when you've found a house?

Geoff I'll be all right in a minute.

Sally I hope so. Come on! (*She pulls Geoff to his feet*) Let's go into the garden!

Geoff Oh. All right. If you want to.

Sally leads him towards the garden

Sally Give us a shout if you want some help, Mummy.

Jane All right.

Sally and Geoff go out into the garden and sit side-by-side on the seat

They're such a sweet couple.

Andrew (*without enthusiasm*) Huh.

Jane gives him a gently reproving smile and gets up

Jane Come on. You can talk to me while I peel the potatoes.

Jane goes out into the hall

Andrew hangs back to look out of the window

Andrew You'd think that boy would be more sympathetic. Typical of his generation. Think of no-one but themselves . . .

Andrew goes out into the hall with his drink as the dialogue starts out in the garden

Sally Why didn't you phone me at the office and tell me?

Geoff Tell you what?

Sally About finding a house! You clever old thing. (*She kisses him enthusiastically*)

Geoff Oh, that . . .

Sally So did you talk to my father?

Geoff (*ruefully*) Oh, yes. We talked all right!

Sally And what did he say?

Geoff (*miles away*) H'm?

Sally About us! Moving in with Peter and the others.

Geoff (*miserably*) Poor Percy . . .

Sally looks puzzled

Sally I thought his name was Peter.

Geoff What?

Sally Michael's friend.

Geoff looks blank

The other chap who's going to share the house with us. (*She waves a hand in front of his blank eyes*) Geoff! The one who's good at plumbing!

He rises agitatedly away from her

Geoff I wasn't talking about him. I was talking about Percy.

Sally Percy? Percy who?

Geoff Merry.

Sally *Who?*

He turns and looks at her in astonishment

Geoff You've never heard of Percy Merry?

Sally No.

Geoff You never *met* him?

Sally (*puzzled*) No.

He paces away below her like a caged lion

Geoff Well, you won't *now*! He used to come in and out of here quite often.

Sally Who did?

Geoff Percy Merry. To read the meter.

Sally looks blank

The gas meter. (*Secretively*) And you know where that is, don't you? (*He points downwards knowingly*)

Sally Well, of course I know where the gas meter is! I just didn't know that a Mr Merry came to read it.

Geoff Well, he won't any more. (*He returns urgently and sits beside her again*) Here! What about his wife?

Sally (*uninterestedly*) Well, *she* can read it if if she wants to.

Geoff Didn't you even send her a bunch of flowers?

Sally What?

Geoff Lilies. Something like that. Afterwards.

Sally does not know what he is talking about

Sally Why should I send lilies to a perfect stranger?

Geoff (*loudly*) And what about the window-cleaner?

Sally I didn't send *him* flowers, either.

Geoff You could have sent them to his wife, though.

Sally How ever many whiskies has Daddy given you?

Geoff Only two. I shall need a hell of a lot more than that to forget what I've heard tonight!

Sally Geoff—what *are* you talking about?

Geoff I'm talking about people! People who—died—*here*. Six of them!

Sally looks puzzled

Sally Six?

He nods solemnly

Geoff Six.

Sally I thought it was only four.

Geoff No—six. Definitely six. There was Mr Merry and the window-cleaner and . . . (*He breaks off*) What do you mean you thought it was only four?

Sally (*thinking hard*) They can't have told me about two of them. Are you sure it was six?

Geoff looks glazed

Geoff That's what they said.

Sally (*realizing*) Ah—yes, of *course*—I didn't know about Mr Merry and the window-cleaner, did I? Yes, that *would* make six.

Geoff You—you mean—you mean you've known all along about the "others"? Ever since we met?

Sally (*blithely*) Oh, yes.

Geoff And you didn't think to—well, to sort of—mention it?

Sally Well, I didn't want you to know. We like to keep it quiet. I mean, we don't want people talking about it or we'll have no friends left.

Geoff cannot believe her calm acceptance of the situation

Geoff But aren't you even shocked?

Sally Come off it, Geoff! It's not *our* fault, is it? These things happen. It's just unfortunate. It doesn't make any difference to *us*, surely?

She tries to cuddle up to him but he is not in the mood to co-operate

Geoff Well, I—I did think it made a little bit of a difference, yes!

Sally gets a bit cross

Sally You're not even sympathetic, are you?

Geoff Sympathetic?

Sally Well, it's not very nice for us, either, you know!

Sally turns away from him, angry at his attitude. Geoff is surprised to find himself under attack and subsides into silence

Inside, Andrew comes in quickly from the hall, goes to the drinks table and picks up the bottle of gin. He is obviously anxious to hide it somewhere

Sarah (*off*) Andrew!

Before Andrew can hide the bottle, Sarah comes in from the hall. She is Andrew's sister, a good-looking woman of about fifty, well-dressed but inclined to be forgetful. Andrew conceals the gin behind his back

Andrew! Why are you running away?

Andrew I wasn't running away.

Sarah Yes, you were. You saw me coming downstairs and you ran away.

That's not a very nice way to treat your sister. (*She looks at him suspiciously*) What have you got behind your back?

Andrew (*guiltily*) W-what?

Sarah You're hiding something.

Andrew No, I'm not.

Sarah Yes, you are! Andrew. . . .!

He tries to elude her, but she dodges around him and sees the bottle of gin

Andrew—it's a bottle of gin.

Andrew What? (*He looks at the gin as if seeing it for the first time*) Good lord. So it is.

Sarah What were you doing with a bottle of gin behind your back?

Andrew I was hiding it. I mean I was looking for it! (*He chuckles*) And here it is. So that's all right, isn't it?

Sarah You weren't trying to hide it from me, were you?

Andrew (*innocently*) What a suggestion. Of course not, Sarah.

Sarah You're being very furtive. Had you forgotten I was coming for the weekend?

Andrew How could I forget a thing like that? I bought this bottle of gin specially. Does Jane know you're here?

Sarah (*vaguely*) Who?

Andrew Jane. The woman I'm married to.

Sarah Oh, *that* Jane! Of course she knows. I arrived this afternoon before she went shopping. Didn't she tell you?

Andrew No. Don't suppose she thought it was important.

Sarah What?

Andrew Well—you know what I mean.

Sarah (*smiling contentedly*) I had a bath and fell asleep.

Andrew Did you really? Good lord. Well, now you're awake and you've found the gin so you're all right, aren't you?

Sarah There's no need to make me sound like an alcoholic. I have been seen *without* a glass in my hand.

Andrew Not after six in the evening you haven't! Tonic?

Sarah Just a little. (*She sits on the sofa*) Do you know it's over six weeks since I saw you?

Andrew Is it really? Well, I don't suppose I've changed very much in that time.

Outside, Geoff notices the new arrival through the window

Geoff Sal . . . ?

Sally (*abruptly*) What?

Geoff Are you expecting anyone *else* for dinner?

Sally No. I don't think so. Why?

Inside, Andrew comes down to the sofa, heading for Sarah with her drink. Geoff sees Andrew, a big smile on his face, approaching an apparently strange lady with a drink containing God knows what. So he panics, and before Sally can stop him he rushes into the house. Sally follows in puzzled surprise

Where are you going?

Inside, Sarah takes the drink from Andrew and looks astonished as a distraught young man rushes in from the garden

Geoff Stop!!

Sarah and Andrew look at him in surprise. He comes to Sarah and points to the drink in her hand

What's that?

Sarah Er—I beg your pardon?

Geoff That! *That!* What is it?

Sarah Well, it's—*(she looks at the drink)*—it's a small gin—*(she looks reprovingly at Andrew)*—and far too much tonic, Andrew!

Andrew Oh, dear. Have I drowned it?

Sarah It would need to be very strong to survive in that lot.

Andrew goes back to the drinks table

Geoff Are you sure?

Sarah What?

Geoff That that's *all* it is!

Sarah Andrew doesn't usually make mistakes with his drinks. *(She prepares to drink)*

Geoff No!

Sarah *(astonished)* What?

Geoff Give it to me!

Geoff takes the drink from her abruptly. Sarah rises in astonishment, unable to believe her eyes

Sarah Just a minute! What on earth . . . ?

Sally Geoff, what *are* you doing?

Geoff moves quickly round below the sofa to Andrew, with Sally following him. He holds the drink out to Andrew

Geoff You try it!

Andrew gives a patient smile. He takes the drink, tastes a little and hands it back to Geoff. Sarah and Sally watch in astonishment

Andrew Tastes perfectly all right to me.

Geoff is a little taken aback

Geoff Oh. Good. That's all right then. *(He goes back to Sarah and gives her the drink with an embarrassed smile)* There you are. It's all right.

Sarah Thank you. *(She takes the drink and looks at Geoff, totally bemused)*
Are you in the habit of bursting into strange houses and taking people's drinks away from them?

Sally comes to the rescue

Sally Aunt Sarah—this is Geoff.

Sarah Oh! So *you're* Geoff! *(Knowingly)* I've heard all about *you*. I

suppose you've come down for the week-end again. (*She looks out of the window*)

Geoff Aunt Sarah? (*He hisses nervously at Sally*) Why didn't you say so? I thought he was giving a drink to a strange woman.

Sally What difference would that make? Honestly, I don't know what's got into you today. (*She sits, disgruntled, in the armchair*)

Andrew, having got himself a drink, wanders towards Sarah

Andrew You any good at brick-laying, Sarah?

Sarah turns from the window in surprise

Sarah Brick-laying? Why?

Andrew He's just found a house and some of his walls need a little encouragement.

Sarah (*confidentially*) You'd think he'd be *pleased* to have found a house, wouldn't you?

Andrew (*thoughtfully*) Yes. I suppose you would really . . .

Sarah He doesn't *look* very pleased, though, does he?

Andrew Very difficult to tell with a face like that.

Andrew turns and bumps into Geoff. Geoff reacts away and sits nervously on the sofa

Sally So it's six now, then, Daddy?

Andrew Oh—he told you, did he?

Sally Yes. Did you *have* to tell him? I didn't want him to know.

Andrew He wouldn't have known if he hadn't left his bag out there in the garden.

Sarah crosses to Geoff

Sarah Ah! So they've told you all about Mr Merry and the others, then?

Geoff Yes, they certainly have!

Sarah sits beside Geoff on the sofa

Sarah Isn't it unfortunate?

Geoff gazes at her incredulously

Geoff Is that what you call it? Unfortunate?

Sarah (*confidentially*) Now look, you won't go gossiping and spreading it around, will you? We don't want *everyone* to know about it.

Geoff No, I bet you don't!

Sarah It'd be such a shame if they had to go and live somewhere else. They're so very fond of this place.

Geoff Even after what's happened here?

Sarah (*sighing fatalistically*) Well, they've just been unlucky, you see.

Geoff can only stare at her in disbelief

Jane comes in from the hall

Jane Dinner won't be very long.

Sarah Good. I'm starving!

Geoff (*to Sarah, urgently*) How can you take it so calmly?

Sarah Well, I *have* had dinner here before.

Geoff No, no! I mean—why aren't you down at the church?

Sarah It's Friday evening. I never pray on a Friday evening.

Geoff Warning the Vicar!

Sarah What?

Geoff He's coming here to tea!

Sarah Oh, good! (*She looks delightedly at Andrew*) I thought it was time you got around to *him*, Andrew.

Andrew Oh, we didn't invite him. He invited himself.

Jane He's new here, you see.

Geoff (*to Sarah*) Aren't you going to stop him?

Sarah What?

Geoff Coming to tea!

Sarah Why should I do that? After all, they are his parishioners.

Jane (*brightly*) I do hope everyone likes leeks. They're out of the garden.
(*She smiles sweetly at Sally*)

Geoff (*to Sarah, desperately*) Aren't you going to warn him? Aren't you going to tell somebody?

Andrew Will you stop firing questions at my sister? She's trying to enjoy her aperitif, before she has her leeks.

Sally Geoff, what *is* the matter with you? I don't see why *you're* upset.
It's much worse for us than it is for you.

Geoff I think I'm going to be sick . . .

Andrew Oh, that's charming. I like that. The minute I introduce you to my sister you start to feel sick. (*To Sarah*) Come along, Sarah. Let's take our drinks into the garden. (*He pulls Sarah to her feet*)

Sarah What a good idea. You coming, Jane?

Jane I think so. For a few minutes.

Andrew leads Sarah and Jane out into the garden

Sarah (*as they go*) It's the best time of the day, isn't it? You can smell the honeysuckle. Your garden really is looking lovely at the moment.

Jane Yes, it is, isn't it? I was looking at it from the top of the ladder at tea-time.

Sarah Good heavens! Wasn't that rather dangerous?

Jane Oh, don't worry. I held on tight.

Andrew, Jane and Sarah laugh and disappear down the garden. Occasionally a ripple of laughter can be heard from them during the scene that now follows inside

Rather fed-up, Sally gets up and goes towards the window

Sally I don't know what's got into you this evening. There was no need to over-react like that. You gave poor Aunt Sarah the fright of her life.

Geoff Well, I didn't know who she was, did I? I've never met her before.
I was only trying to protect her.

Sally Protect her? From what?

Geoff (*with difficulty*) Well—after what your father told me, I couldn't be sure *what* was going to happen to her, could I?

Sally Not a lot could happen to her sitting down!

Geoff I wouldn't be too sure about that!

Sally (*edgily*) Well! This is going to be a really great weekend with you in this mood! (*She turns away and looks out of the window*)

Geoff Look—be reasonable! I didn't know about Percy Merry and all that lot before. It's bound to make a difference.

Sally (*turning*) I don't see why. After all, it's nothing for *you* to be upset about. (*Returning to him*) How do you think Mummy and Daddy feel? It can't be very nice for them, wondering if dinner guests are going to pass out before the pudding! (*She sits beside him and cuddles up close*) Oh, come on Geoff—don't let's think about that. Let's think about *this*. (*She cuddles up to him sexily*)

Geoff (*miserably*) But that's just the trouble! Now I know about *that*, I can't concentrate on *this*. I mean—how long will it be before the next one?

Sally How do *I* know? But it's months now since the last one so maybe our luck's changing.

Geoff (*wildly*) Oh, don't lose heart! The Vicar's coming to tea next week!

Sally (*patiently*) Don't be silly, darling. Nothing'll happen to the Vicar.

Geoff Don't you be too sure!

Sally (*close to him*) No, no. The window-cleaner was the last one. I'm certain of it. I just have the feeling that we're going to be luckier from now on. You see.

Geoff But I . . .

She stops his mouth with a kiss. He surfaces and attempts to continue speaking

I heard what they . . .

She kisses him again

Sally Dinner will be ready soon. I must go and change.

Before he can protest any further Sally runs off into the hall

There is a burst of laughter out in the garden. Geoff is left, still troubled. He goes to the drinks table to pour himself a large whisky. He tries the soda syphon but it is now empty. He cannot see another one on the table, but remembers where they are kept. He puts down his glass and goes to the cupboard behind the armchair. He moves the chair out of the way, opens the door and the limp body of a man falls out into his astonished arms

Andrew, Jane and Sarah enter in the garden talking happily, oblivious of Geoff's predicament

Geoff staggers a little under the weight of his burden, wondering what the hell to do

Andrew Your glass looks very empty, Sarah.

Sarah (*feigning surprise*) Oh—yes, Andrew, I believe it is.

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