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THE DOCK BRIEF

A Play

by

JOHN MORTIMER

SAMUEL



FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK TORONTO SYDNEY HOLLYWOOD

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CHARACTERS

MORGENHALL, an unsuccessful barrister

FOWLE, an unsuccessful criminal

*The action of the Play is in two Scenes and passes in a
prison cell*

Time—the present

THE DOCK BRIEF

SCENE I

SCENE—*A prison cell.*

The walls are grey and fade upwards into the shadows, so that the ceiling is not seen, and it might even be possible to escape upwards. The door, up one step, is L of the back wall, and there is a small barred window high up in the wall R, through which the sky looks very blue. There is a bed, with a pillow and two dark blankets, against the wall L. A small table stands R of the door, with a Bible on it, and an enamel bucket under it. R of the window is a towel-rail with a towel. Under the window there is a chair with a stool on top of it.

(See the Ground Plan at the end of the Play)

When the CURTAIN rises, FOWLE, a small, fat man, is standing on the stool on tip-toe, his hands in his pockets. He is peering out of the window at the sky. The bolts of the door shoot back and the door opens. MORGENHALL strides in. He is an aged barrister with appearance of a dusty vulture, dressed in a black gown and bands. He carries a brief-case and his legal wig. He stands by the door and speaks to an unseen warder off.

MORGENHALL. Is this where—you keep Mr Fowle? Good, excellent. *(He turns to the table, puts down his brief-case and wig, moves c and looks towards the door, Then leave us alone like a good fellow. Would you mind closing the door? These old places are so draughty.*

(The door closes. The bolts shoot back)

(He looks around) Mr Fowle—where are you, Mr

Fowle? Not escaped, I pray. (*He looks around and sees Fowle*) Good Heavens, man, come down. Come down, Mr Fowle.

(*MORGENHALL darts at Fowle and there is a struggle he pulls the bewildered FOWLE down*)

I haven't hurt you? (*He takes the stool from the chair and sets it on the floor LC*)

(*FOWLE makes a negative-sounding noise*)

I was suddenly anxious. A man in your unfortunate position. Desperate measures. And I couldn't bear to lose you. No, don't stand up. It's difficult for you without braces, or a belt, I can see. And no tie, no shoelaces. I'm so glad they're looking after you. You must forgive me if I frightened you just a little, Mr Fowle. It was when I saw you up by that window . . .

FOWLE (*in a hoarse and sad voice*) Epping Forest.

MORGENHALL (*turning to him*) What did you say?

FOWLE. I think you can see Epping Forest.

MORGENHALL. No doubt you can. But why, my dear chap, why should you want to?

FOWLE. It's the home stretch.

MORGENHALL. Very well.

FOWLE. I thought I could get a glimpse of the green. Between the chimneys and that shed . . . (*He climbs on to the chair*)

(*MORGENHALL crosses to FOWLE and there is a brief renewed struggle*)

MORGENHALL. No, get down. It's not wise to be up there, forever trying to look out. There's a draughty, sneeping wind. Treacherous. (*He draws Fowle c*)

FOWLE. Treacherous?

MORGENHALL. I'm afraid so. You never know what a mean, sneeping wind can do. Catch you by the throat, start a sneeze, then a dry tickle on the chest, I don't want anything to catch you like that before . . .

FOWLE. Before what?

MORGENHALL. You're much better sitting quietly down here in the warm.

(FOWLE crosses and sits on the bed)

Just sit quietly and I'll introduce myself. (*He takes off his gown and puts it on the upstage end of the bed*)

FOWLE. I am tired.

MORGENHALL. I'm Morgenhall. (*He sits on the stool*)

FOWLE. Morgenhall?

MORGENHALL. Morgenhall. The barrister.

FOWLE. The barrister?

MORGENHALL. Perfectly so.

FOWLE. I'm sorry.

MORGENHALL. Why?

FOWLE. A barrister. That's very bad.

MORGENHALL. I don't know. Why's it so bad?

FOWLE. When a gentleman of your stamp goes wrong. A long fall.

MORGENHALL. What can you mean?

FOWLE. Different for an individual like me. I only kept a small seed shop.

MORGENHALL. Seed shop? My poor fellow. We mustn't let this unfortunate little case confuse us. We're going to come to important decisions. Now, do me a favour, Mr Fowle, no more seed shops.

FOWLE. Bird-seed, of course. Individuals down our way kept birds mostly. Canaries and budgies. The budgies talked. Lot of lonely people down our way. They kept them for the talk.

MORGENHALL. Mr Fowle. I'm a barrister.

FOWLE. Tragic.

MORGENHALL. I know the law.

FOWLE. It's trapped you.

MORGENHALL. I'm here to help you.

FOWLE. We'll help each other.

(*There is a pause then MORGENHALL laughs uncontrollably*)

MORGENHALL. I see. Mr Fowle, I see where you've been bewildered. You think I'm in trouble as well. Then I've got good news for you at last. I'm free. Oh, yes, I can leave here when I like.

FOWLE. Can you?

MORGENHALL. The police are my friends.

FOWLE. They are?

MORGENHALL. And I've never felt better in my life. There now. That's relieved you, hasn't it? I'm not in any trouble. (*He takes his spectacle case from his pocket and puts on his spectacles*)

FOWLE. Family all well?

MORGENHALL. I never married.

FOWLE. Rent paid up?

MORGENHALL. A week or two owing, perhaps. Temporary lull in business. This case will end all that.

FOWLE. Which case?

MORGENHALL. Your case.

FOWLE. My . . . ?

MORGENHALL. Case.

FOWLE. Oh, that—it's not important.

MORGENHALL. Not?

FOWLE (*rising*) I don't care about it to any large extent. Not as at present advised.

MORGENHALL. Mr Fowle. How could you say that?

FOWLE. The flavour's gone out of it.

MORGENHALL. But we're only at the beginning.

FOWLE (*crossing to c*) I can't believe it's me concerned.

MORGENHALL. But it is you, Mr Fowle. You mustn't let yourself forget that. You see, that's why you're here.

FOWLE. I can't seem to bother with it. (*He moves up c*)

MORGENHALL. Can you be so busy?

FOWLE. Slopping in, slopping out. (*He moves down rc*) Peering at the old forest. It fills in the day.

MORGENHALL. You seem, if I may say so—(*he rises*) to have adopted an unpleasantly selfish attitude.

FOWLE. Selfish?

MORGENHALL. Dog in a manger. (*He moves c*)

FOWLE. In the . . . ?

MORGENHALL. Unenthusiastic.

FOWLE. You're speaking quite frankly, I well appreciate . . .

MORGENHALL. I'm sorry, Fowle. You made me say it. There's so much of this about, nowadays. There's so much ready-made entertainment. Free billiards,

National Health, Television. There's not the spirit abroad there used to be.

FOWLE. You feel that?

MORGENHALL. Whatever I've done, I've always been mustard keen on my work. I've never lost the vision, Fowle. In all my disappointments I've never lost the love of the job.

FOWLE. The position in life you've obtained to.

MORGENHALL. Years of study I had to put in. It didn't just drop in my lap.

FOWLE. I've never studied. (*He sits on the chair R*)

MORGENHALL. Year after year, Fowle, my window at college was alight until two a.m. There I sat among my books. I fed mainly on herrings . . .

FOWLE. Lean years?

MORGENHALL. And black tea. No subsidized biscuits, then, Fowle, no County Council tobacco, just work.

FOWLE. Bookwork, almost entirely? I'm only assuming that, of course.

MORGENHALL. Want to hear some Latin?

FOWLE. Only if you have time.

MORGENHALL. *Actus non sit reus nisi mens sit rea. Filius. Nullius In flagrante delicto.* Understand it? (*He removes his spectacles*)

FOWLE. I'm no scholar.

MORGENHALL. You most certainly are not. But I had to be, we all had to be in my day. Then we'd sit for the examinations; mods, smalls, greats, tripos, little goes—rowing men fainting, Indian students vomiting with fear, and no creeping out for a peep at the book under the pretext of a pump ship or getting a glance at the other fellow's celluloid cuff.

FOWLE. That would be very unheard of?

MORGENHALL. Then weeks, months of waiting. (*He crosses to L*) Nerve racking. Go up to the Lake District. Pace the mountains, play draughts—(*he crosses to C*) forget to huff. (*He moves up RC*) Then comes the fatal postcard.

FOWLE. What's it say?

MORGENHALL. Satisfied the examiners.

FOWLE. Well done!

MORGENHALL. Don't rejoice so soon. True enough, I felt I'd turned a corner, got a fur hood, bumped on the head with a Bible. Told the only lady in my life that in five years' time, perhaps . . .

FOWLE. You'd arrived.

MORGENHALL. That's what I thought when they painted my name up on my London chambers. I sat down to fill in the time until they sent my first brief in a real case. I sat down to do the crossword puzzle while I waited. Five years later, Fowle, what was I doing?

FOWLE. A little charge of High Treason?

MORGENHALL. I was still doing the crossword puzzle.

FOWLE. But better at it?

MORGENHALL. Not much. Not very much. As the years pass there come to be clues you no longer understand.

FOWLE. So all that training?

MORGENHALL. Wasted. The talents rust.

FOWLE. And the lady?

MORGENHALL. Drove an ambulance, in the nineteen-fourteen. A stray piece of shrapnel took her. *(He picks up his brief-case)* I don't care to talk of it.

FOWLE. Tragic.

MORGENHALL. It was.

FOWLE. Tragic my wife was never called up.

MORGENHALL *(moving down c)* You mustn't talk like that, Fowle, your poor wife.

FOWLE. Don't let's carry on about me.

MORGENHALL. But we must carry on about you. That's what I'm here for.

FOWLE. You're here to . . .

MORGENHALL. To defend you. *(He crosses to LC and puts the brief-case on the stool)*

FOWLE. Can't be done.

MORGENHALL. Why ever not?

FOWLE. I know who killed her.

MORGENHALL. Who?

FOWLE. Me.

(There is a pause. MORGENHALL swings round up L, and after considerable thought, giggles)

MORGENHALL. Really, Mr Fowle, I have all the respect in the world for your opinions, but we must face this. You're a man of very little education.

FOWLE. That's true.

MORGENHALL. One has only to glance at you to see that you're a person of very limited intelligence. (*He crosses to Fowle*)

FOWLE. Agreed, quite frankly.

MORGENHALL. You think you killed your wife.

FOWLE. Seems so to me.

MORGENHALL. Mr Fowle. Look at yourself objectively. On questions of bird-seed I have no doubt you may be infallible—but on a vital point like this might you not be mistaken? Don't answer . . .

FOWLE. Why not, sir?

MORGENHALL. Before you drop the bomb of a reply, consider who will be wounded. Are the innocent to suffer?

FOWLE. I only want to be honest.

MORGENHALL. But you're a criminal, Mr Fowle. You've broken through the narrow fabric of honesty. You are free to be kind, human, to do good.

FOWLE. But what I did to her . . .

MORGENHALL. She's passed, you know, out of your life. You've set up new relationships. You've picked out me.

FOWLE. Picked out?

MORGENHALL. Selected.

FOWLE. But I didn't know . . . (*He rises*)

MORGENHALL. No, Mr Fowle. That's the whole beauty of it. You didn't know me. You came to me under a system of chance, invented, like the football pools, to even out the harsh inequality of a world where you have to deserve success. You, Mr Fowle, are my first Dock Brief.

FOWLE. Your Dock . . . ?

MORGENHALL. Brief.

FOWLE. You couldn't explain?

MORGENHALL. Yes, yes, of course.

(*They both cross to LC*)

Criminals with no money and no friends exist. Luckily, you're one of them. They're entitled to choose any barrister sitting in court to defend them. The barrister, however old, gets a brief—(*he moves up c*) and is remunerated on a modest scale. Busy lawyers, wealthy lawyers, men with other interests, creep out of court bent double when the Dock Brief is chosen. (*He moves down c*) We regulars who are not busy sit on. I've been a regular for years. It's not etiquette, you see, even if you want the work, to wave at the prisoner, or whistle, or try to catch his eye by hoisting any sort of little flag.

FOWLE. Didn't know.

MORGENHALL. But you *can* choose the most advantageous seat. The seat any criminal would naturally point at. It's the seat under the window, and for ten years my old friend Tuppy Morgan, bagged it each day at ten. He sat there, reading *Horace*, and writing to his innumerable aunts, and almost once a year, a criminal pointed him out. Oh, Mr Fowle, Tuppy was a limpet on that seat. But this morning, something, possibly a cold, perhaps death, kept him indoors. So I had his place. And you spotted me, no doubt.

FOWLE. Spotted you?

MORGENHALL. My glasses polished. My profile drawn and learned in front of the great window.

FOWLE. I never noticed.

MORGENHALL. But when they asked you to choose a lawyer!

FOWLE. I shut my eyes and pointed—I've picked horses that way, and football teams. Never did me any good, though, by any stretch of the imagination.

MORGENHALL. So even you, Mr Fowle, didn't choose me?

FOWLE. Not altogether.

MORGENHALL. The law's a haphazard business.

FOWLE. It does seem chancy.

MORGENHALL. Years of training, and then to be picked out like a football pool.

FOWLE. Don't take it badly, sir.

MORGENHALL. Of course, you've been fortunate.

FOWLE. So unusual. (*He crosses to the bed*) I was

never one to draw the free bird at Christmas, or guess the weight of the cake. Now, I'm sorry I told you.

MORGENHALL. Never mind. You hurt me, temporarily, Mr Fowle, I must confess.

(FOWLE sits on the bed, leans back and puts his feet up)

(He moves the stool to c) It might have been kinder to have kept me in ignorance. (He moves to the table, picks it up and sets it between the stool and the bed) But now it's done. Let's get down to business. And, Fowle——

FOWLE. Yes, sir?

MORGENHALL. —remember you're dealing with a fellow man. A man no longer young. Remember the hopes I've pinned on you and try——

FOWLE. Try . . . ?

MORGENHALL. —try to spare me more pain.

FOWLE. I will, sir. Of course I will.

MORGENHALL (picking up his brief-case) Now. (He sits on the stool) Let's get our minds in order. (He takes some newspapers, a bottle of medicine, a paper-backed book and an old envelope from his brief-case, puts them on the table, then takes a pencil stub from his pocket, puts the brief-case on the floor and puts on his spectacles)

FOWLE. Sort things out.

MORGENHALL. Exactly. Now, this wife of yours.

FOWLE. Doris?

MORGENHALL. Doris. (He makes notes on the envelope) A bitter, unsympathetic woman?

FOWLE. She was always cheerful. She loved jokes.

MORGENHALL. Oh, Fowle. Do be very careful.

FOWLE. I will, sir. But if you'd known Doris . . . She laughed all day and all night. "Thank God", she'd say, "for my old English sense of fun."

MORGENHALL. What sort of jokes, Fowle, did this Doris appreciate?

FOWLE. All sorts.

(MORGENHALL writes)

Pictures in the paper. Jokes on the wireless set. Laughs out of crackers, she'd keep them from Christmas to Christmas and trot them out in August.

(MORGENHALL *stops writing and looks up*)

MORGENHALL. You couldn't share it?

FOWLE. Not to that extent. I often missed the funny point.

MORGENHALL. Then you'd quarrel?

FOWLE. "Don't look so miserable, it may never happen." She said that every night when I came home. "Where'd you get that miserable expression from?"

MORGENHALL. I can see it now. There is a kind of Sunday evening appearance to you.

FOWLE. I was quite happy. But it was always, "Cat got your tongue?" "Where's the funeral?" "Play us a tune on that old fiddle face of yours." Then we had to have our tea with the wireless on, so that she'd pick up the phrases.

MORGENHALL. You're not a wireless lover?

FOWLE. I couldn't always laugh. And she'd be doubled up across the table, gasping as if her lungs were full of water. "Laugh," she'd call. "Laugh, damn you. What've you got to be so miserable about?" Then she'd go under, bubbling like a drowning woman.

MORGENHALL (*taking off his spectacles*) Made meals difficult?

FOWLE. Indigestible. I would have laughed, but the jokes never tickled me.

MORGENHALL. They tickled her?

FOWLE. Anything did.

(MORGENHALL *puts on his spectacles and resumes writing*)

Anything a little comic. Our names were misfortunate.

MORGENHALL. Your names?

FOWLE. Fowle. Going down the aisle she said: "Now we're cock and hen, aren't we, old bird?" She laughed so hard we couldn't get her straightened up for the photograph.

MORGENHALL. Fond of puns, I gather you're trying to say.

FOWLE. Of any sort of joke. I had a little avairy at the bottom of my garden. As she got funnier so I spent more time with my birds. Budgerigars are small parrots. Circles round their eyes give them a sad, tired look.

MORGENHALL (*looking up*) You found them sympathetic?

FOWLE. Restful.

(MORGENHALL *writes*)

Until one of them spoke out at me.

MORGENHALL. Spoke—what words?

FOWLE. "Don't look so miserable, it may never happen."

MORGENHALL. The bird said that?

FOWLE. She taught it during the day when I was out at work. It didn't mean to irritate.

MORGENHALL. It was wrong of her, of course. To lead on your bird like that.

FOWLE (*rising and crossing to R*) But it wasn't him that brought me to it. It was Bateson, the lodger.

MORGENHALL (*turning in his stool to face Fowle*) Another man?

FOWLE. At long last.

MORGENHALL. I can see it now. A crime of passion. An unfaithful wife. *In flagrante* . . . Of course, you don't know what that means. We'll reduce it to manslaughter right away. A wronged husband and there's never a dry eye in the jury-box. You came in and caught them.

FOWLE. Always laughing together.

MORGENHALL. Maddening.

FOWLE. He knew more jokes than she did.

MORGENHALL. Stealing her before your eyes?

FOWLE. That's what I thought. He was a big man. Ex-police. Said he'd been the scream of the station. I picked him for her specially. In the chitty I put in the local sweetshop. I wrote: "Humourous type of lodger wanted."

MORGENHALL. But wasn't that a risk?

FOWLE. Slight, perhaps. But it went all right. Two days after he came he poised a bag of flour to fall on her in the kitchen. Then she sewed up the legs of his pyjamas. They had to hold on to each other so as not to fall over laughing. "Look at old misery standing there," she said, "he can never see anything subtle."

MORGENHALL. Galling for you. Terribly galling.

FOWLE. I thought all was well. (*He moves c*) I spent more time with the birds. I'd come home late and always be careful to scrunch the gravel at the front door. I went to bed early and left them with the Light Programme. On Sunday mornings I fed the budgies and suggested he took her tea in bed. "Laughter," she read out from her horoscope, "leads to love, even for those born under the sign of the virgin."

MORGENHALL. You trusted them. They deceived you.

FOWLE. They deceived me all right. (*He moves to the chair R and sits*) And I trusted them to do the right thing. Especially after I'd seen her on his knee and them both looking at the cartoons from one wrapping of chips.

MORGENHALL. Mr Fowle. I'm not quite getting the drift of your evidence. My hope is—your thought may not prove a shade too involved for our literal-minded judge. (*He takes off his spectacles and puts them in the case*) Old Tommy Banter was a rugger blue in ninety-eight. He never rose to chess and his draughts had a brutal unintelligent quality.

FOWLE. When he'd first put his knee under her I thought he'd do the decent thing. I thought I'd have peace in my little house at last. The wireless set dead silent. The end of all that happy laughter. No sound but the twitter from the end of the garden and the squeak of my own foot on the linoleum.

MORGENHALL (*pointing at Fowle with his spectacle case*) You wanted . . .

FOWLE. I heard them whispering together and my hopes raised high. Then I came back and he was gone.

MORGENHALL. She'd . . .

FOWLE. Turned him out. Because he was getting

over familiar. "I couldn't have that," she said. "I may like my laugh, but, thank God, I'm still respectable. No, thank you, there's safety in marriage." She'd sent him away, my last hope.

MORGENHALL. So you . . . ? (*He looks at Fowle and makes a gesture with his spectacle case*)

FOWLE (*nodding*) I realize I did wrong.

MORGENHALL. You could have left.

FOWLE. Who'd have fed the birds? That thought was uppermost.

MORGENHALL. So it's not a crime of passion?

FOWLE. Not if you put it like that.

MORGENHALL (*putting his spectacle case in his pocket*) Mr Fowle. (*He rises*) I've worked and waited for you. (*He moves up c*) Now, you're the only case I've got, and the most difficult.

FOWLE. I'm sorry.

MORGENHALL (*moving down rc*) A man could crack his head against a case like you and still be far from a solution. Can't you see how twelve honest hearts will snap like steel when they learn you ended up your wife because she *wouldn't* leave you?

FOWLE. If she had left, there wouldn't have been the need.

MORGENHALL. There's no doubt about it. As I look at you, now, I see you're an unsympathetic figure.

FOWLE. There it is.

MORGENHALL. It'll need a brilliant stroke to save you. (*He moves up l*) An unexpected move—something pulled out of a hat. (*He turns and thumps the table*) I've got it. Something really exciting. The surprise witness.

FOWLE. Witness?

MORGENHALL. Picture the scene, Mr Fowle. The court-room silent. The jury about to sink you. The prosecution flushed with victory. And then I rise, my voice a hoarse whisper, exhausted by that long trial. (*He picks up his wig and puts it on*) "My Lord. If your Lordship pleases."

FOWLE (*rising and moving c*) What are you saying?

MORGENHALL. Good Heavens, man, you don't expect

me do this off the cuff, without any sort of rehearsal?

FOWLE. No . . .

MORGENHALL (*leading Fowle to the table*) Well, come along, man, sit down.

(*FOWLE sits on the table, with his feet on the stool*)

(*He takes the towel from the rail*) Now, this towel over your head, please, to simulate the dirty grey wig. (*He drapes the towel over Fowle's head*) Already you appear anonymous and vaguely alarming. Now, Fowle, forget your personality. You're Sir Tommy Banter, living with a widowed sister in a draughty great morgue on Wimbledon Common. Digestion, bad. Politics, an independent moral Conservative. Diversions, snooker in the basement of the morgue, peeping at the lovers on the Common and money being given away on the television. In love with capital punishment, corporal punishment, and a younger brother who is accomplished at embroidery. A small, alarmed man. Served with distinction in the Great War at sentencing soldiers to long terms of imprisonment. (*He crosses R and stands behind the chair*) A man without friends, unexpectedly adored by a great-niece, three years old.

FOWLE. I am?

MORGENHALL. Him.

FOWLE. It feels strange.

MORGENHALL. Now, my Lord. I ask your Lordship's leave to call the surprise witness.

FOWLE. Certainly?

MORGENHALL. What?

FOWLE. Certainly.

MORGENHALL (*crossing to LC*) For Heaven's sake, Fowle, this is like practising bullfights with a kitten. Here's an irregular application by the defence, something that might twist the trial in the prisoner's favour and prevent you catching the connection at Charing Cross. Your breakfast's like a lead weight on your stomach. The dog bit your ankle on the way downstairs. No, blind yourself with rage and terrible justice. (*He crosses to R and stands behind the chair*)

FOWLE. No. You can't call the surprise witness.

MORGENHALL. That's better. Oh, my Lord. *(He raises his left arm, facing L)* If your Lordship would listen to me.

FOWLE. Certainly not. You've had your chance. Let's get on with it.

MORGENHALL. My Lord. Justice must not only be done, but must clearly be seen to be done. *(He lowers his arm and faces front)* No-one knows, as yet, what my surprise witness will say. *(He faces L)* Perhaps he'll say the prisoner is guilty in his black heart as your Lordship thinks. *(He faces front)* But perhaps, gentlemen of the jury, we have trapped an innocent. If so, shall we deny him the one door through which he might walk to freedom? The public outcry would never die down.

FOWLE *(snatching off the towel and rising angrily to his feet)* Hear, hear!

MORGENHALL. What's that?

FOWLE. The public outcry.

MORGENHALL. Excellent. Now, towel back on.

(FOWLE resumes his seat and puts the towel on his head)

You're the judge.

FOWLE *(as the judge)* Silence! I'll have all those noisy people put out. Very well. Call the witness. But keep it short.

MORGENHALL. Deathly silence as the witness walks through the breathless crowds. Let's see the surprise witness.

(MORGENHALL. slowly looks from L to R. FOWLE follows the look. MORGENHALL looks at the door.

FOWLE does the same)

(He crosses to Fowle) Take the towel off.

(FOWLE rises, moves up C, stands on the step and takes off the towel. MORGENHALL moves behind the chair)

FOWLE *(standing very straight)* I swear to tell the truth . . .

MORGENHALL. You've got a real feeling for the Law. A pity you came to it so late in life.

FOWLE. The whole truth . . .

MORGENHALL. Now, what's your name?

FOWLE (*absent-mindedly*) Herbert Fowle.

MORGENHALL (*facing L and clapping his hands in annoyance*) The witness.

FOWLE. Martin Jones.

MORGENHALL. Good, good, yes, very good. (*He faces front*) Now, you knew Herbert Fowle?

FOWLE. All my life.

MORGENHALL. Always found him respectable?

FOWLE. Very quiet-spoken man, and clean living.

MORGENHALL. Where was he when this crime took place?

FOWLE. He was . . .

MORGENHALL (*turning to Fowle*) Just a moment. (*He faces L*) My Lord, will you sharpen a pencil and note this down.

FOWLE (*moving RC*) You dare to say that? To him?

MORGENHALL. Fearlessness, Mr Fowle. The first essential in an advocate.

(*FOWLE moves to the table, sits and puts on the towel*)

Is your Lordship's pencil poised?

FOWLE (*as the judge*) Yes, yes. Get on with it.

MORGENHALL. Where was he?

(*FOWLE rises, goes to the step and takes off the towel*)

FOWLE (*as the witness*) In my house.

MORGENHALL. All the evening?

FOWLE. Playing whist. I went to collect him and we left Mrs Fowle well and happy. I returned with him and she'd been removed to the Country and General.

MORGENHALL (*crossing to Fowle*) Panic stirs the prosecution benches. The prosecutor tries a few fumbling questions. But you stand your ground, don't you?

FOWLE. Certainly.

MORGENHALL (*moving behind the chair*) My Lord. I demand the prisoner be released.

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