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SF PERUSALS

APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH

by Agatha Christie

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

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APPOINTMENT WITH DEATH was first performed at the Piccadilly Theatre in London, on the March 31, 1945. The performance was directed by Terence de Marney. The cast was as follows:

MRS BOYNTON. . . . . .Mary Clare
GINEVRA BOYNTON . . . . . Deryn Kerbey
LENNOX BOYNTON . . . . . Ian Lubbock
RAYMOND BOYNTON . . . . . John Wynn
NADINE BOYNTON. . . . . .Beryl Machin
HOTEL CLERK. . . . . Anthony Dorset
AN ITALIAN GIRL . . . . . .Cherry Herbert
ALDERMAN HIGGS. . . . . .Percy Walsh
AN ARAB BOY . . . . . .John Glennon
LADY WESTHOLME. . . . . .Janet Burnell
MISS AMABEL PRYCE . . . . . .Joan Hickson
DR. THEODORE GERARD . . . . . Gerard Hinze
SARAH KING. . . . . .Carla Lehmann
JEFFERSON COPE. . . . . .Alan Sedgwick
A DRAGOMAN . . . . . Harold Berens
COLONEL CARBERY. . . . . .Owen Reynolds

CHARACTERS

MRS BOYNTON
GINEVRA BOYNTON – her stepdaughter
LENNOX BOYNTON – her elder stepson
RAYMOND BOYNTON – Lennox's younger brother
NADINE BOYNTON – Lennox's wife
HOTEL CLERK
AN ITALIAN GIRL
ALDERMAN HIGGS
AN ARAB BOY
LADY WESTHOLME
MISS AMABEL PRYCE
DR. THEODORE GERARD
SARAH KING
JEFFERSON COPE
A DRAGOMAN
COLONEL CARBERY

NOTES ON CASTING

HOTEL CLERK may double with **COLONEL CARBERY**.
JEFFERSON COPE may double with **THE DRAGOMAN**.
ITALIAN GIRL may double with **SARAH KING**.
Minimum number of performers: 13

TIME

1945

SETTING

ACT I

The lounge of the King Solomon Hotel, Jerusalem. Afternoon.

ACT II

Scene One: The Travellers' Camp at Petra. Early afternoon. A week later.
Scene Two: The same, three hours later.

ACT III

Scene One: The same, the following morning.
Scene Two: The same, the same afternoon.

NOTES ON SENSITIVE TERMINOLOGY

Language used by the author in her stage directions and by her characters to describe mental and physical conditions and disabilities is of the period in which the play was first performed. We are confident that the author's intention was to be neutral within the stage directions – not to convey anything other than the facts of the characteristics relevant to a character's portrayal. The dialogue, however, is the embodiment of the character speaking and must express his or her intentions at that point in the play. This means that the author will have chosen terminology to be spoken with varying degrees of precision, sensitivity and, possibly, deliberate insensitivity according to the character and the circumstances in which he or she is speaking.

In our published version, therefore, we have applied the following logic:

• In stage directions, we have used terminology which is as neutral and factual as can be conceived, knowing that this will sometimes still fail.

• In dialogue, we have preserved the author's words as originally written.

We license this play on the basis that terms used in dialogue relevant to the physical and mental conditions of these characters may be changed in production to whichever best convey the author's intention for the audience. Sometimes this will be a neutral term, sometimes it will be a term which reflects the character's personality and/or the context in which they are speaking. Which of these applies is for directors and actors to interpret.

ACT I

(The lounge of the King Solomon Hotel, Jerusalem. Afternoon. From the lounge there is access to a terrace which extends round the hotel out of view. A wide expanse of blue sky can be seen beyond. On the terrace there is a balcony rail, two chairs, a table, and a sunshade. Within there is a lift behind sliding doors, a quadrant counter for the reception clerk, a small table with five chairs around it and an additional low table with an armchair round it. From the lounge there is a passageway to the main entrance and another leading to other parts of the hotel. **MRS. BOYNTON** *is seated. She is a vast, obese woman rather like an idol, with a deep voice and an expressionless face. She moves her head and eyes but not her body. A stick is beside her chair. Her family is grouped round her like courtiers round a queen.* **GINEVRA BOYNTON**, *her daughter, is a pretty girl of nineteen with a lost, vacant expression. She sits staring into space. Occasionally her lips move as though she is talking to herself and her fingers pick at a handkerchief she is tearing into little bits.* **NADINE BOYNTON**, *the daughter-in-law, is a quiet woman of twenty-eight. She is sewing.* **LENNOX BOYNTON**, *Mrs. Boynton's elder son and Nadine's husband is holding a book upside down and appears to be reading. The hotel clerk is behind his desk. A glamorous* **ITALIAN GIRL**

enters from the main entrance and crosses to the desk.)

GIRL. *La mia chiave, per favore.*

CLERK. *(Puzzled.)* I beg your pardon?

GIRL. *(Emphasising.) Chiave.* Ah, you do not understand. My – key – please.

CLERK. Oh. Certainly, *signorina.*

(He hands her a key.)

GIRL. Grazie, signor.

(She moves towards the lift. The doors open and **ALDERMAN HIGGS** *enters. He is a portly, middle-aged man and has a broad Lancashire accent. He stands aside to let the* **GIRL** *pass, half-raising his hat.)*

(Smiling.) Signor.

(The **GIRL** *exits to the lift. The doors close.* **HIGGS** *glances curiously at the* **BOYNTONS**. *He goes hurriedly towards the main entrance but then stops and approaches the desk.)*

HIGGS. Any letters for me? Name of 'iggs.

CLERK. Letters are at the concierge's office in the hall, sir.

HIGGS. Conciurge? Must you call 'em by these fancy names? What's wrong with "porter?"

CLERK. *(Indifferently.)* Just as you please, sir.

HIGGS. Five quid a day you're charging me 'ere, and I don't think so much of this place. Give me the Midland at Manchester even if it 'asn't got so many fancy columns. See 'ere, if one of them Dragomen chaps turns up from Cook's askin' for me, you tell 'im to wait till I come back. See?

*(***HIGGS** *exits to the main entrance. Silence.* **NADINE** *drops her scissors. As she picks them up,* **MRS. BOYNTON***'s head turns to look at her.* **GINEVRA***'s lips move, she smiles, her fingers work and a faint whispering comes from*

her. **MRS. BOYNTON** *transfers her attention to* **GINEVRA** *and contemplates her in silence for a moment.)*

MRS. BOYNTON. Jinny!

*(***GINEVRA** *starts, she opens her mouth to speak but says nothing. The sound of a bus arriving and the murmur of voices are heard off. An* **ARAB BOY**, *carrying some baggage enters and crosses to the desk. He gets directions from the* **CLERK** *and exits into the hotel.* **LADY WESTHOLME, MISS PRYCE** *and* **DR. GERARD** *enter and go to the desk.* **LADY WESTHOLME** *is a large important looking woman, very British.* **MISS PRYCE** *is a typical spinster, she wears a large terai hat with many bead chains.* **DR. GERARD** *is a good looking, middle aged Frenchman. He carries a newspaper.)*

LADY WESTHOLME. I am Lady Westholme.

(The **CLERK** *indicates a pile of registration forms.)*

CLERK. You will register, please.

LADY WESTHOLME. You received my wire from Cairo?

CLERK. Certainly, Lady Westholme. Your rooms are reserved. One-one-eight and one-one-nine on the second floor.

LADY WESTHOLME. I prefer the first floor.

CLERK. I am afraid we have nothing vacant on the first floor.

(The **ARAB BOY** *enters from the hotel.)*

LADY WESTHOLME. I have chosen to stay here instead of at the High Commissioner's and I expect to be treated properly. If there are no rooms vacant on the first floor, somebody must be moved. You understand?

CLERK. *(Defeated.)* If your ladyship will go temporarily to the second floor we will arrange something before tonight. Can I have your passport please?

(He indicates the form.)

Surname, Christian names and nationality, please.

*(***LADY WESTHOLME** *reluctantly fills in the form.)*

LADY WESTHOLME. *(Loudly.) British.*

DR. GERARD. *(Softly.)* Very definitely.

CLERK. Boy.

(He hands a key to the **ARAB BOY** *who moves to the lift and rings the bell.* **LADY WESTHOLME** *follows him, watched by* **MRS. BOYNTON. MISS PRYCE** *struggles with her form.)*

MISS PRYCE. Oh dear, I hope I've filled this in right. I always find these forms so confusing.

*(***DR. GERARD** *assists her.)*

DR. GERARD. The nationality here. You too are British?

(The **ARAB BOY** *returns to the desk.* **LADY WESTHOLME** *waits impatiently.)*

MISS PRYCE. Oh, well yes, certainly – at least – really, you know, *(Confidentially.)* I'm Welsh – but still, it's all the same.

(She drops her handbag nervously. **DR. GERARD** *picks it up for her.)*

DR. GERARD. Allow me.

MISS PRYCE. Oh, thank you.

(She takes the bag and turns to the **CLERK**.*)*

Have you – is there – I believe you have a room booked for me – one with a view towards the Dead Sea, I asked for.

CLERK. The name?

MISS PRYCE. Oh, dear me – how stupid of me. Pryce. Miss Pryce. Miss Amabel Pryce.

(The lift doors open. **LADY WESTHOLME** *exits. The* **CLERK** *turns to the* **ARAB BOY** *and hands him a key.)*

CLERK. Number four-eighty-four.

(The **ARAB BOY** *moves to the lift and rings the bell.* **MISS PRYCE** *drops her handbag again.* **DR. GERARD** *picks it up and hands it to her.)*

MISS PRYCE. So stupid of me. Thank you so much.

(The lift doors open. The **ARAB BOY** *exits.* **MISS PRYCE** *hurries over.)*

Wait for me! Wait for me!

(She exits. The doors close. **DR. GERARD** *fills in a form then turns to the* **CLERK**.*)*

DR. GERARD. Dr. Theodore Gerard.

CLERK. Oh yes, Doctor Gerard. Number four-eighty-four.

(He hands him a key. **DR. GERARD** *moves to the lift and waits.* **GINEVRA** *looks at him. The lift doors open.* **SARAH KING** *enters. She is an attractive girl of twenty-three. She passes* **DR. GERARD**, *hesitates, then smiles at him.)*

DR. GERARD. *(Bowing.)* How do you do?

SARAH. I'm so pleased to see you. I never thanked you for helping me the other night at the station in Cairo.

DR. GERARD. That was nothing – a pleasure. You are enjoying Jerusalem, Miss – er –?

SARAH. King – Dr. Sarah King.

DR. GERARD. *(Gaily.)* Ah, we are colleagues.

(He takes a card from his pocket and hands it to her.)

Dr. Gerard.

SARAH. Colleagues?

(She looks at the card.)

SARAH. Dr. Theodore Gerard. Oh. *(Reverently.)* Are you *the* Dr. Gerard? But yes, you must be.

DR. GERARD. I am Dr. Theodore Gerard. So, as I say, we are colleagues.

SARAH. Yes, but you're distinguished and I am only starting.

DR. GERARD. *(Smiling.)* Oh, well, I hope it will not be like your English proverb – wait a minute so that I get it right. *(Slowly.)* "Doctors differ and patients die."

SARAH. Fancy your knowing that! Just as well we haven't any patients. Have you just come in on the afternoon train?

DR. GERARD. Yes. With a very important English lady. *(Grimacing.)* Lady Westholme. Since God is not in Jerusalem, she is forced to put up with the King Solomon Hotel.

SARAH. *(Laughing.)* Lady Westholme is a political big bug. In her own eyes at any rate. She's always heckling the Government about housing or equal pay for women. She was an undersecretary or something – but she lost her seat at the last election.

DR. GERARD. Not the type that interests you?

SARAH. No – but –

(She drops her voice and draws **DR. GERARD** *aside.)*

– there's someone over there who does. Don't look at once. It's an American family. They were on the train with me yesterday. I talked to the son.

*(***DR. GERARD** *looks over at* **LENNOX**.*)*

Not that one – a younger one. He was rather nice. Extraordinary looking old woman, isn't she? Her family seems absolutely devoted to her.

DR. GERARD. *(Quietly.)* Possibly because they know she will not long be with them. You recognised the signs?

SARAH. How long would you give her?

DR. GERARD. Perhaps six months – who knows? You will have a drink?

SARAH. Not now. I've got to call for a parcel at one of the shops. I must hurry. Another time.

*(***SARAH** *gives him a friendly nod and exits to the main entrance.* **DR. GERARD** *looks after her a moment then turns to the* **CLERK**.*)*

DR. GERARD. *Cinzano a l'eau*, please.

(He moves slowly to the armchair. As he passes, he glances at the book **LENNOX** *is holding. He sits and opens his newspaper, covertly studying the* **BOYNTONS**. *The* **CLERK** *claps his hands and the* **ARAB BOY** *enters. The* **CLERK** *gives him* **DR. GERARD***'s order and the* **ARAB BOY** *exits into the hotel.* **GINEVRA** *raises her head and watches* **DR. GERARD**. *Her fingers twist and tear her handkerchief.)*

MRS. BOYNTON. *(Suddenly.)* Ginevra, you're tired.

*(***GINEVRA** *jumps.)*

You'd better go and rest.

GINEVRA. I'm not tired, Mother. I'm not really.

MRS. BOYNTON. Yes, you are. I always know. I don't think…

(She pauses.)

I don't think you'll be able to do any sightseeing tomorrow.

GINEVRA. *(Vehemently.)* Oh, but I shall. I'm quite all right.

*(***MRS. BOYNTON** *speaks with slow relish.)*

MRS. BOYNTON. No, you're not. You're going to be ill.

GINEVRA. *(Hysterically.)* I'm not. I'm not.

MRS. BOYNTON. Go up and lie down.

GINEVRA. I'm not going to be ill. I don't want to be ill.

MRS. BOYNTON. I always know.

NADINE. I'll come up with you, Jinny.

MRS. BOYNTON. No, let her go up alone.

GINEVRA. I want Nadine to come.

(Her handkerchief slips from her fingers to the floor.)

NADINE. Then of course, I will.

MRS. BOYNTON. The child prefers to go by herself.

(She fixes **GINEVRA** *with her eye.)*

Don't you Jinny?

(There is a pause.)

GINEVRA. *(Mechanically.)* Yes – I'd rather go alone. Thank you, Nadine.

(She crosses slowly to the lift. **MRS. BOYNTON** *watches her. The lift doors open. The* **ITALIAN GIRL** *enters. She has changed into a very revealing sunsuit and carries a magazine and an unlighted cigarette in a long holder.* **GINEVRA** *passes her and exits into the lift. The doors close. The* **GIRL** *goes to the* **CLERK** *and he lights her cigarette for her.)*

GIRL. I would like a Martini, please.

(She goes on to the terrace and looks out at the view a while before exiting. The **ARAB BOY** *enters with Dr. Gerard's drink. He takes it to him and then takes the Girl's order from the* **CLERK** *before exiting back into the hotel.* **JEFFERSON COPE** *enters from the main entrance. He is about forty-five, a pleasant, normal, rather old-fashioned American. He approaches the* **BOYNTONS**.*)*

COPE. I was looking around for you all. How do you find yourself, Mrs. Boynton? Not too tired by the journey from Cairo?

*(***MRS. BOYNTON** *is suddenly very gracious.)*

MRS. BOYNTON. No, thank you. My health's never good, as you know...

COPE. *(Sympathetically.)* Why, of course. Too bad, too bad.

MRS. BOYNTON. But I'm certainly no worse. Nadine takes good care of me, don't you Nadine?

NADINE. *(Vacantly.)* I do my best.

COPE. *(Heartily.)* Why, I bet you do. Well, Lennox, what do you think of King David's city?

*(***LENNOX** *continues to look at his book and does not answer.)*

MRS. BOYNTON. Lennox.

LENNOX. Sorry – what did you say, Cope?

COPE. I asked what you thought of King David's city.

LENNOX. Oh – I don't know.

COPE. Find it kind of disappointing, do you? I'll confess it struck me that way at first. But perhaps you haven't been around much yet?

LENNOX. We can't do much because of Mother.

MRS. BOYNTON. A couple of hours' sightseeing is about all I can do.

COPE. I think it's wonderful you manage to do all you do, Mrs. Boynton.

MRS. BOYNTON. I don't give in to my body. It's the mind that matters – yes, the mind.

*(***RAYMOND BOYNTON** *enters from the main entrance. He carries a wrapped bottle of medicine. He is a good looking young man of twenty-four. He is smiling and looking happy.)*

COPE. *(Playfully.)* Hullo Ray, caught sight of you just now as I came in but you were too busy to see me.

MRS. BOYNTON. Busy?

(She turns her head slowly to **RAYMOND**. *His smile vanishes.)*

Did you get my medicine at the chemist?

RAYMOND. Yes Mother, here it is.

(He hands her the package, avoiding her eye.)

COPE. That was a nice looking girl you were talking to, Ray.

MRS. BOYNTON. A girl? What girl?

RAYMOND. *(Nervously.)* She was – on the train last night. I helped her with some of her cases – they were a bit heavy.

MRS. BOYNTON. I see.

(She stares intently at **RAYMOND** *who turns desperately to* **COPE.***)*

RAYMOND. I suppose you've seen all there is to see by this time.

(The **ARAB BOY** *enters carrying a tray with the Girl's drink. He takes it out on the terrace then exits along it.)*

COPE. Well, I hope to have done Jerusalem pretty thoroughly in another couple of days and then I'm going to have a look at Petra, the rose red city of Petra – most remarkable natural phenomenon, right off the beaten track.

MRS. BOYNTON. "A rose red city – half as old as time."

RAYMOND. It sounds marvellous.

COPE. It's certainly worth seeing.

(He hesitates then turns to **MRS. BOYNTON.***)*

I wonder if I couldn't persuade some of you people to come along with me? I know you couldn't manage it, Mrs. Boynton and naturally some of your family would want to remain with you – but if you were to divide forces, so to speak…

(He looks from one to the other, finally at **MRS. BOYNTON.***)*

MRS. BOYNTON. *(Expressionless.)* I don't think that we'd care to divide up. We're a very united family.

(She pauses.)

What do you say, children?

LENNOX. No Mother.

RAYMOND. Oh no.

MRS. BOYNTON. You see. They won't leave me. What about you Nadine? You didn't say anything.

NADINE. No thank you, not unless Lennox cares about it.

MRS. BOYNTON. Well Lennox, what about it? Why don't you and Nadine go? She seems to want to.

LENNOX. *(Nervously.)* I – well – no – I – I – I think we'd better all stay together.

COPE. Well – you are a devoted family.

MRS. BOYNTON. We keep ourselves to ourselves.

*(***COPE** *exchanges a look and a smile with* **RAYMOND**. **SARAH** *enters from the main entrance carrying a small parcel. She catches* **RAYMOND***'s eye then goes onto the terrace and exits along it.* **MRS. BOYNTON** *watches* **RAYMOND** *intently.)*

MRS. BOYNTON. Is that the girl you were talking to outside?

RAYMOND. Yes – er – yes.

MRS. BOYNTON. Who is she?

RAYMOND. Her name is King. She's – she's a doctor.

MRS. BOYNTON. I see. One of those women doctors. *(Deliberately.)* I don't think we'll have much to do with her, son.

(She rises.)

Shall we go up now?

(They all rise. **NADINE** *hastily puts her sewing together then hands* **MRS. BOYNTON** *her stick.)*

I don't know what I should do without Nadine. She takes such good care of me.

(She moves towards the lift. **COPE**, **NADINE**, **LENNOX** *and* **RAYMOND** *move with her. It*

is a royal procession. **COPE** *rings the lift bell.* **DR. GERARD** *watches them.)*

MRS. BOYNTON. But it's dull for her sometimes. You ought to go sightseeing with Mr. Cope, Nadine.

COPE. *(Eagerly.)* I shall be only too delighted. Can't we fix up something definite?

NADINE. We'll see – tomorrow.

(The lift doors open. **MRS. BOYNTON**, **NADINE**, **LENNOX** *and* **RAYMOND** *exit. The doors close.* **COPE** *wanders around for a moment then crosses to* **DR. GERARD**.*)*

COPE. Excuse me – but surely you're Dr. Theodore Gerard?

DR. GERARD. Yes. But I'm afraid…

COPE. Naturally you wouldn't remember me. But I had the pleasure of hearing you lecture at Harvard last year and of being introduced to you afterwards. *(Modestly.)* Oh, I was just one of fifty or so. A mighty interesting lecture it was of course – on psychiatry.

DR. GERARD. You are too kind.

COPE. Jerusalem certainly is full of celebrities. We must have a drink. What are you drinking?

DR. GERARD. Thank you. *Cinzano à l'eau.*

COPE. By the way, the name's Cope.

(He turns to the **CLERK**.*)*

A *Cinzano à l'eau* and a rye straight.

(The **CLERK** *claps his hands. The* **ARAB BOY** *enters and takes the order.)*

DR. GERARD. Tell me, I am interested, is that a typical American family to whom you were talking?

COPE. Why no, I wouldn't say it was exactly typical.

DR. GERARD. They seem – a very devoted family.

COPE. You mean they all seem to revolve round the old lady? That's true enough. She's a very remarkable woman, you know.

DR. GERARD. Indeed? Tell me something about her.

COPE. I've had that family a good deal on my mind lately. You see young Mrs. Boynton, Mrs. Lennox Boynton, is an old friend of mine.

DR. GERARD. Ah yes, that very charming young lady?

COPE. That's right – that's Nadine. I knew her before her marriage to Lennox Boynton. She was training to be a nurse. Then she went for a vacation to stay with the Boyntons, they were distant cousins – and she married Lennox.

DR. GERARD. And the marriage – it has been a happy one?

(A pause.)

COPE. I – I hardly know what to say about that.

DR. GERARD. You are worried about something?

COPE. Yes. I'd value your opinion – that is, if you won't be bored?

DR. GERARD. I shall not be bored. People are my speciality – they always interest me. Tell me about this Boynton family.

COPE. Well, the late Elmore Boynton was a very rich man. This Mrs. Boynton was his second wife.

DR. GERARD. She is the stepmother then?

COPE. Yes, but they were young children at the time of the marriage and they've always looked upon her as their own mother. They're completely devoted to her, as you may have noticed.

DR. GERARD. I noticed their – devotion, yes.

COPE. Elmore Boynton thought a lot of his second wife. When he died he left everything in her hands. She has an excellent head for business. Since his death she's devoted herself entirely to those children, she's shut out the outside world altogether. I'm not sure, you know, that that is really a sound thing to do.

DR. GERARD. Nothing could be more harmful to developing mentalities.

COPE. *(Struck.)* Well now, that's rather what I feel. In her devotion to them she's never let them make any outside contacts. Result is, they've grown up kind of – nervy. They can't make friends with strangers.

DR. GERARD. Do they all live at home? Have the sons no professions? No careers?

COPE. No, there's plenty of money you see.

DR. GERARD. But they are dependent on their stepmother financially?

COPE. That's so. She's encouraged them to live at home and not go out and look for jobs.

(The **ARAB BOY** *enters with two drinks on a tray. He serves* **COPE** *and* **DR. GERARD** *then exits into the hotel.)*

They don't play golf, they don't belong to any country clubs, they don't go to dances or meet other young people.

DR. GERARD. What do they do, then?

COPE. Well, they just – sit around. You've seen them today.

DR. GERARD. And you disapprove?

COPE. *(Heatedly.)* No boy ought to keep on being tied to his mother's apron strings. He ought to strike out and be independent.

DR. GERARD. And suppose that was impossible?

COPE. What do you mean – impossible?

DR. GERARD. There are ways, Mr. Cope, of preventing a tree from growing.

COPE. *(Staring.)* They're a fine, healthy, well grown lot.

DR. GERARD. The mind can be stunted as well as the body.

COPE. The mind?

DR. GERARD. I don't think you have quite grasped my point.

*(***COPE** *stares.)*

But continue.

COPE. What I feel is that it's time Lennox Boynton stopped just sitting around twiddling his thumbs. How can a man who does that hope to keep a woman's respect.

DR. GERARD. *(Significantly.)* Aha – I see – you are thinking of his wife.

COPE. I'm not ashamed of my feeling for that lady. I am deeply attached to her. All I want is her happiness. If she were happy with Lennox I'd sit right back and fade out of the picture.

DR. GERARD. Chivalry only lives today in the American nation.

COPE. I don't mind your laughing at me, Dr. Gerard. I dare say I sound romantic and old fashioned, but that young man riles me. Sitting there reading a book and taking no notice of his wife or anybody else.

DR. GERARD. But he was not reading a book.

COPE. *(Puzzled.)* Not reading – but he had a book…

DR. GERARD. He was holding that book upside down. Curious, is it not?

(He sees Ginevra's torn handkerchief on the floor and picks it up.)

And here is something else. A handkerchief that has been torn to pieces by a girl's fingers.

COPE. But that's – that's very extraordinary.

DR. GERARD. Yes it is extraordinary. It is also very interesting.

COPE. Well, I've a great respect for maternal devotion, but I think it can be carried too far.

(He glances at his watch.)

I've got to get down to the American Express before they close. See you later.

DR. GERARD. *A toute à l'heure.*

*(***COPE** *exits to the main entrance.* **DR. GERARD** *looks anxiously at the handkerchief.)*

Maternal devotion? I wonder.

*(**GINEVRA** enters. She pauses and looks around, then comes swiftly across to **DR. GERARD**.)*

GINEVRA. Please, please – I must speak to you.

*(**DR. GERARD** looks at **GINEVRA** in astonishment.)*

DR. GERARD. Miss Boynton?

*(**GINEVRA** takes his arm.)*

GINEVRA. *(Dramatically.)* They're taking me away. They're planning to kill me or shut me up. You must help me – you *must* help me.

(She stares pleadingly up at his face.)

DR. GERARD. This is your handkerchief?

GINEVRA. Yes.

(She takes the handkerchief without interest.)

Listen – I don't belong to them really. My name's not really Boynton at all. I'm –

(She draws herself up.)

– Royal.

*(**DR. GERARD** studies her intently.)*

DR. GERARD. I see. Yes, I see.

GINEVRA. I knew I could trust you. There are enemies you know, all round me. They try to poison my food – all sorts of things – they don't let me speak to anyone. If you could help me to escape –

(She starts and looks around.)

They're coming. I'm spied on all the time. They mustn't know I've spoken to you.

*(**GINEVRA** exits into the hotel. **DR. GERARD** is stunned. He looks after her with interest.)*

DR. GERARD. *Nom d'un nom d'un nom!*

*(**SARAH** enters on the terrace and comes into the room.)*

SARAH. Has something upset you, Dr. Gerard?

DR. GERARD. Yes, I am upset. *Quelle histoire!* Royal blood, persecution, poison in the food, surrounded by enemies.

(The lift doors open. **LADY WESTHOLME**, **MISS PRYCE** *and the* **DRAGOMAN** *enter.* **LADY WESTHOLME** *carries a copy of* The Times, **MISS PRYCE** *has her handbag and the* **DRAGOMAN** *carries curios.)*

SARAH. But that…

(She breaks off as **LADY WESTHOLME** *approaches, closely followed by the* **DRAGOMAN**.*)*

LADY WESTHOLME. Ah – Dr. Gerard. I've been looking for you. The arrangements for our trip to Petra are quite complete. We start on Tuesday and spend the night at Amaan, then on to Petra the following day. The journey will be made in a first class touring car. This is our dragoman – Mahommed.

DRAGOMAN. My name not Mahommed, lady. My name Aissa.

LADY WESTHOLME. I always call dragomen Mahommed.

DRAGOMAN. I Christian dragoman. Name Aissa, all same Jesus.

LADY WESTHOLME. Most unsuitable. I shall call you Mahommed so please don't argue.

DRAGOMAN. As you like lady. I always give satisfaction.

(He produces a handful of dirty and torn letters.)

You see, here are testimonials. Here one from English lady – Countess like you. Here one from very reverend clergyman – Bishop – wear gaiters and very funny hat. Here letter Miss Coralle Bell, lady who act and dance

on stage. All say same thing – Aissa very clean – very religious – know all about Bible history.

LADY WESTHOLME. *(Severely.)* I hope you *are* clean. Those testimonials look filthy to me.

DRAGOMAN. No, no, lady – no filthy postcards. No hot stuff. All very Christian – like Aissa. Aissa very clean. Very hygiene.

LADY WESTHOLME. As I was saying, we will start Tuesday. That will be four of us – Mahommed, you and I – and now who is the fourth?

*(***MISS PRYCE** *gives an apologetic little cough.)*

Oh yes, Miss Pryce, of course.

MISS PRYCE. So kind of you. Really, it will be a wonderful experience. Perhaps a little tiring.

LADY WESTHOLME. I never feel fatigue.

MISS PRYCE. It really is wonderful – in spite of all you do.

LADY WESTHOLME. I have always found hard work a great stimulant. I was about to say, Dr. Gerard, that will leave a vacant place in the car since Mahommed, of course, will sit beside the driver.

DRAGOMAN. I stop car, turn round and tell you everything we see.

LADY WESTHOLME. That's what I'm afraid of.

(During the following the **DRAGOMAN** *moves to the desk and has a word with the* **CLERK**.*)*

It occurred to me that if you knew of anyone suitable it would reduce the expense. I abhor useless extravagance.

(She looks pointedly at **SARAH**.*)*

DR. GERARD. Miss King? You were I believe, expressing the wish to visit Petra. May I introduce Miss King – no, Dr. King – Lady Westholme.

LADY WESTHOLME. *(Patronisingly.)* I am always glad to meet a young woman who has set out to make a career for herself.

MISS PRYCE. Yes, women do such wonderful things nowadays.

LADY WESTHOLME. Don't be foolish, Miss Pryce. You had better go with Mahommed and buy that Keatings powder at the chemists. We shall probably need it.

DRAGOMAN. No, no – no bugs – no fleas. Everything very nice – very clean.

LADY WESTHOLME. *(Impatiently.)* Get the Keatings.

MISS PRYCE. Yes, yes, of course Lady Westholme.

(She drops her bag. The **DRAGOMAN** *picks it up for her and they exit hurriedly to the main entrance.)*

DRAGOMAN. I take you curio shop, too. Crosses, paper knives, inkstands, all made out of olive wood from Mount of Olives. Very nice souvenirs take home. All genuine – no rubbish.

LADY WESTHOLME. She's a well meaning creature, but of course not quite a Sahib. Still, one mustn't let her feel that. I do so abhor snobbishness. Well Miss King, I hope you will join us. But please do not bring a lot of baggage. We shall travel light.

SARAH. I shall have to think it over.

LADY WESTHOLME. *(Graciously.)* Discuss it with Dr. Gerard.

(She turns to **DR. GERARD**.*)*

I think we shall be meeting again at the High Commissioner's at dinner tonight?

DR. GERARD. I shall look forward to that pleasure.

*(***LADY WESTHOLME** *goes over to the armchair, sits and reads her paper.* **DR. GERARD** *turns to* **SARAH**.*)*

Have you seen the view from the terrace – it is really very fine.

(They exit on the terrace. **HIGGS** *enters and goes towards the lift.)*

CLERK. Excuse me sir, but I am changing your room.

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