

ALL AFLOAT

It is the dockside in Liverpool, during the 1920's. A liner is about to sail for America. We can hear a brass band playing somewhere in the background, and there are streamers and balloons festooning the area. A group of people enter. They are about to board the ship. They are Lord Montague Willoughby St John Carstaires, known as 'Monty'; his wife Caroline Victoria, The Lady Carstaires; Monty's younger brother, The Honourable Frederick, Hugh Philip Farquhar Carstaires, or 'Freddie', for short, and for obvious reasons!! Also, Alice Sutton, Caroline's maid, and Wil, a sailor, each struggling to bring as much of the Carstaires' luggage as they can manage in one go. Trailing behind them all, Penelope Petersham, known as 'Pest', for forgotten reasons! She is carrying her own modest case.

They move across the 'stage', and as they do so, we have a kind of prologue. A young man dashes in from the opposite direction. A shout of 'Stop, thief!' goes up. Alice and Wil, with their arms full, are unable to do anything. The Carstaires simply get out of the way, as though they are avoiding something unsavoury and beneath them. Pest, however, rises to the occasion. She dumps her case. As the thief approaches her, she grabs his arm and wheels him around to face her. She says:

PEST Oi, you. The man said stop. Didn't you hear him?

She promptly displays great pugilistic skill, giving him a swift uppercut to the jaw. The man crumples in a heap. Inspector Foot arrives on the scene, incognito, at this point, and hauls the culprit off with a suitable Footie comment such as 'You come along with me now, young fellow m'lad', or some other appropriate comment.

The others stare in amazement at Pest, except for Wil who chuckles quietly to himself. Pest dusts herself down and picks up her case.

CARO (in a withering tone) Where did you learn such behaviour?

PEST Finishing school.

MONTY Switzerland?

PEST (matter of factly) Wigan!*

She strides on across the stage area completely unaware of the reaction of the others and wholly uncaring of it. The others follow her, Lady Caroline shaking her head in mortification and disbelief, Monty chuckling and quietly repeating 'Wigan' to himself, Wil now impassive once more, and Alice looking disapproving. They all exit behind Pest.*

.....

* Or other similar local landmark

We here a voice off – ‘All ashore that’s going ashore!’ The ships’ hooters blare out as the unseen liner leaves Liverpool. The evening now begins

Caroline and Monty enter. They are taking an after dinner stroll on the deck. Monty is smoking a large-ish cigar. They come to a halt centre stage. For all he is a lord, Monty’s ways are rough and ready, and his bank balance –and his love of indulging himself in only the best wine, women, and fine cognac- is dependant solely upon his wife’s money. They both resent this. His powers of reasoning are not vast, and considerably less than Caro’s. Her manner towards Monty is formal and cold:

CARO Well Monty, do you think she’ll take him?

MONTY Better had do, old girl, pockets are a bit to let at the moment... *(he pulls out pockets)*

CARO Don’t be so vulgar.

MONTY *(sarcastically)* Sorry, old thing, what comes of being brought up in the stables *(he smacks her derriere playfully, but quite hard)*, and then on to a cavalry regiment.

CARO *(glaring at him)* Do you think she’ll accept?

MONTY Should say so. A Carstaires. Make a lady of her – that’s all a filly dreams of.

CARO He’s only a younger brother, there’s no title.

MONTY Like you got, eh? That’s all you married me for, wasn’t it Caro? Miss Caroline Barton did well for herself didn’t she?

CARO You got a good bargain, Monty. My money to pay your debts – ongoing expenses - and a wife who’ll put up with your little indiscretions.

MONTY Two way trade, my dear, two way trade. *(Caro looks at him in disgust)*

Caro catches sight of Pest as she enters.

CARO *(in a stage whisper)* Quiet! Here she comes. *(to Pest)* Pen, there you are. What a charming little choker. I have a little pearl bracelet that would go with it beautifully. You must let me give it to you.

PEST There’s no need, Lady Caroline, really.

CARO Oh, but I insist. I'll look it out for you. Come to my cabin later (*Monty gives Caro a clear look signalling that she should leave. She reluctantly takes the hint*). Well, if you'll excuse me... (*She exits*).

MONTY (*clearing his throat*) Lovely evening.

PEST Yes.

MONTY Cabin all right?

PEST Yes. Thank you. Yours?

MONTY (*lecherously*) Very nice. (*He smiles/leers at Pest*). Charming little thing.

PEST I beg your pardon?

MONTY (*making a recovery*) Caro - absolutely right! – (*testosterone take-over again!*) charming- (*recovering himself*) -necklace thingummy- bracelet - go well with it.

PEST (*Hiding a laugh*) Oh, I see.

MONTY (*remembering his pressing financial needs*) Er, now then, that young brother of mine. Not a bad fellow, y'know. A girl could do worse. Sure he's damn-dashed fond of you. In fact, told me so himself. Dashed fond of her, he said to me. Could do worse – him - I mean you-with him!

PEST (*suppressing her laughter*) Really?

MONTY Absolutely. (*Slight pause*) So that's settled then. (*He makes to leave, the job done!*)

PEST I beg your pardon?

MONTY You'll have him then.

PEST As what?

MONTY Husband. (*He gives a relieved grin as he still thinks he's done his bit*).

PEST Lord Montague –

MONTY Monty, please. Barely remember the last time given the full moniker.

PEST Monty... we may have a small problem here.

MONTY Problem, darling girl? (*Leering slightly again*) Problem?

PEST Yes. When exactly did Freddie tell you of ...his feelings?

MONTY Er... can't say exactly...er, yesterday?

PEST Yesterday.

MONTY *(Encouraged by her calm manner)* Absolutely.

PEST Oh dear.

MONTY *(Looking worried, but also getting a little exasperated)* Beg pardon?

PEST Well, you see, Freddie and I only met this afternoon.

MONTY *(Looking totally crestfallen)* Think I need to speak to Caro. Excuse me, m'dear... *(He kisses her hand, and keeps hold of it as he says again)* charming little thing-er- necklace, thingummy! *(He drags himself away muttering and wiping his forehead with his handkerchief. Pest chuckles to herself)*

Wil enters leisurely, from the opposite direction.

WIL You're a cool one, you, aren't you?

PEST *(As she swings around to face him)* I beg your pardon? Oh, Wil, it's you! *(They embrace each other)*

WIL I'm impressed.

PEST Should you be here?

WIL Probably not.

PEST You could get into trouble.

WIL That's as may be.

PEST And you say I'm the cool one?

WIL *(He shrugs)* Are you going to tell on me?

PEST I have no reason to.

WIL Thank you... Miss. *(He starts to exit from whence he came)*

PEST Wil, we have to talk. *(Wil turns back to face her)*

WIL I know, Pest, but I'm probably a lost cause, you know.

PEST I won't believe that, Wil. I need you back at home.

WIL I'm a restless soul, and that's the truth of it.

PEST Can we at least discuss it?

WIL Later, maybe. *(He exits)*

Pest watches him go, and shakes her head. She removes her spectacles and produces a small handkerchief to wipe them. As she does so, the ship's siren blows loudly and makes her jump. She drops her specs and goes down on hand and knees trying to find them. Captain John Bentham enters to be confronted with Pest's rear view as she does this. He is Canadian, but is often mistaken for an American.

JOHN Hello, can I assist?

PEST *(turning her head to see who is speaking to her, but continuing her search)* Oh... spectacles!

JOHN I beg your pardon?!

PEST My spec- my glasses. I've lost them somewhere.

John moves to assist and finding her glasses picks them up.

JOHN Are these what you're looking for? I'm sorry, I haven't introduced myself. I know how you English like to observe the formalities. I'm John Bentham. And you are?

PEST *(Scrambling to her feet)* Pes- Penelope Petersham. *(They shake hands).*

JOHN Petersham... now why does that name sound familiar?

PEST Oh, you've probably heard of Dad-dy. He's in, *(slight pause)* ceramics.

JOHN Petersham ceramics...*(He mulls the name over for a moment)* No, I don't think that's... *(he lets the remark trail off)* you mean jugs, vases, that kind of thing?

PEST *(Ruefully)* Well, no, actually. It's more like basins, baths and lavatory pans, but Dad – daddy says I must say ceramics. It'll make me more acceptable.

JOHN I'm sure you're perfectly acceptable.

PEST I am?

JOHN Ah-ha. Are you travelling alone?



PEST Oh, no. I'm with Lord and Lady Carstaires. Her brother -in -law and I are about to become engaged –possibly –I think. Well, never mind that.

JOHN Shame.

PEST Yes - for him, I suppose it is.

JOHN That's not what I meant.

PEST Well, I'm not exactly the catch of the season. Dad says at my age now, I'm a bit like old stock – not shop soiled or anything - just getting on a bit and a little worn and cracked around the edges.

JOHN Your edges look fine to me.

PEST They do? I'm afraid I can't see your edges. They're all a bit blurred, er... *(pointing to her specs)*

JOHN *(He puts them on for her)* There. Is that better?

PEST *(She focuses on him)* Oh! Oh, yes.

JOHN You're looking a little flushed. Are you all right?

Pest nods dumbly.

JOHN You say you're travelling with Montague Carstaires?

PEST Monty yes- that's what he told me to call him. He says everybody does. You didn't . Do you know him?

JOHN His friends call him that. And yes... we've met. *(Changing the mood and the subject)* Well, it's been a pleasure meeting you. I'm sure we'll bump into each other again before the voyage is over.

Alice enters.

ALICE Excuse me, Miss, but Lady Carstaires is looking for you.

PEST Thank you, Alice. I'll come now.

JOHN Good evening, Miss Petersham. *(He exits past Pest and Alice)*

PEST Oh, yes.

Pest exits past Alice who moves to centre stage. Freddie enters. His manners are much more polished and gentlemanly than Monty's, but his morals are equally questionable, particularly where ladies are concerned, and his brain power is not



vast. Such as it is, he concentrates mostly on ways of seducing ladies who may then lavish gifts on him. Money just runs through his fingers. Despite this he has a genuine and deep affection for Alice He comes up behind her and puts his arms around her waist.

ALICE *(Spinning around to face him)* Freddie! There you are. I can't stay long. She'll be looking for me in a minute.

FREDDIE Thought I'd stood you up, eh? You know I'd never do that to you, Alice.

ALICE How many times have you used that line, I wonder?

FREDDIE Frequently, but with you I mean it.

ALICE God help me, but I believe you. We're a pair of scoundrels, you and me. Maybe that's the attraction.

FREDDIE You're the only girl for me, Alice. I really think you could keep me on the straight and narrow.

ALICE *(laughing)* Oh, that's rich, when I can't even keep meself on it.

FREDDIE Is the jewellery still... disappearing?

ALICE I'd never see you again if it didn't. I'd be gone, you know that.

FREDDIE They want me to propose to Pen Petersham.

ALICE You mean his Lordship does. I'm not so sure that her ladyship's over keen on the idea. I reckon she might rather keep her handsome young brother-in-law to herself. I listen to them talking. They ignore me as though I was invisible, unless they wants something.

FREDDIE Well, I won't do it. I shall refuse. They'll have to find the money another way.

ALICE They'll make you.

FREDDIE I'll think of something. If only I'd been the elder brother.

ALICE Then you'd have been a Lord... and I could have been a Lady.

FREDDIE Would you like that, Alice?

ALICE Who wouldn't?!

FREDDIE Then we'll have to see what we can do.

Caro is seen at the side of the stage. Neither Freddie or Alice see her, but she sees them. She stares at them momentarily before quickly exiting. We then hear Caro's voice off stage calling for Alice.

ALICE Better go, or she'll come looking for me.

FREDDIE *(He pulls her to him)* I'll see you later. *(He gives her a quick kiss as she runs off)*

Caro re-enters. She walks right up to Freddie and without saying a word delivers a stinging slap to his face. She turns on her heel and exits. He is still reeling from this when Monty enters. He is in bullying big brother mode. He can get away with it with Freddie, who responds a bit like a spoilt child who isn't getting what he wants.

MONTY Freddie. Been looking for you.

FREDDIE Thought you might.

MONTY Need you to speak to the Petersham filly. Thought I'd got it all sorted out and then she floored me with some damned excuse about not having met you until today. Can't see what that's got to do with it – good God, this is marriage we're talking about. Less y'know of each other the better, in my experience. When mating, shut your eyes, mount up and think of the money. *(He suits action to words!)*

FREDDIE I won't do it.

MONTY What?!!

FREDDIE No.

MONTY Oh, yes you will. We have to have her money, or we'll be ruined. I have... people I have to pay. Debts of honour.

FREDDIE You'll be ruined, not me. What about Caro's money?

MONTY Gone.

FREDDIE *(He pales).* All of it?

MONTY Pretty much. God knows where it's all gone to. *(Freddie looks uncomfortably self-conscious).* Maybe she didn't come with as much as we thought.

FREDDIE What about the jewellery?

MONTY *(After a moment's pause)* So, the little minx told you about that. *(Freddie looks uncomfortable, again).* Oh, I'm not blind, I know where you've been entertaining yourself recently.



FREDDIE I happen to love Alice.

MONTY *(Snorts with laughter)* She's a clever little filly ain't she? A little charmer. But she's a servant and you're a Carstairs. Bed her all you like, but you don't wed her.

FREDDIE How dare you speak about Alice like that!

MONTY I'll speak of her how I chose, and you'll do as you're told, otherwise that little Alice of yours could not only be losing her job, but may very well end up in prison.

FREDDIE I don't know exactly how you made her take the jewellery, but –

MONTY Then you should ask her some time.

FREDDIE Perhaps I will.

MONTY Do that, but in the meantime, you'll do as you're told.

Freddie storms off. Wil enters and approaches Monty. In the following interchange, we see Monty as the blustering, coward that he really is. Wil maintains his usual calm.

WIL Good evening, Lord Montague.

Monty acknowledges the greeting with a curt nod.

WIL Trying times, my Lord.

MONTY I *beg* your pardon?

WIL Brothers can cause problems, can't they?

MONTY Who the Hell are you?

WIL I'm pleased to hear that you're trying to... acquire the money you need... as will our mutual friends.

MONTY *(Fearful but trying to cover it up)* I asked you who you were, sir.

WIL No need to 'sir' me, my Lord. There is a need, however, for me to be able to tell our friends that they can expect payment very soon. Can I do that, my Lord?

MONTY *(trying, but failing, to maintain a high handed tone)* Of course. Absolutely. Just finalising the last few details.

WIL So I heard. And... payment is imminent.

MONTY I've said. Absolutely.

WIL Life is strange isn't it, my Lord. Sometimes we can plan and plot, but things just won't go our way. At other times things simply fall into our lap, but it all seems to balance out eventually. *(He turns to leave, and then as though remembering something, turns back to Monty and says...)* Oh, thought you may like to know, one of your fellow passengers is Captain John Bentham.

MONTY Jack Bentham!?

WIL That's right, my Lord. He was always known as Jack in the regiment. Goodnight, My Lord.

Wil exits in one direction, Monty scurries off in the other, looking very shaken.

Alice enters. She pulls a handful of jewellery from her pocket. There are some gold chains, strings of pearls and the bracelet that Caro had said she would give to Pest. She is looking at these, and puts on the bracelet, which has an unusual clasp, admiring it, as Caro enters unseen by Alice.

CARO Alice! *(Alice spins around, stuffing the jewellery into her pocket)*

ALICE Your Ladyship you gave me a He... real fright you did.

CARO I'll give you more than that if you don't sharpen up your ideas. I have been trying to find a small pearl bracelet for Miss Petersham. It does not appear to be in any of my jewel cases. I need you to find it for me.

Alice covers the wrist with the bracelet on with her other hand

ALICE Yes, your Ladyship. Can you remember where you last saw it, your Ladyship?

CARO Good grief! If I could remember that I wouldn't be looking for it now, would I? Stupid girl.

ALICE No, m'Lady. Er... I'm just running an errand for his Lordship, and I'll be right there.

CARO Very well. Be as quick as you can.

Alice bows a curtsey as Caro exits. A moment later Monty enters.

MONTY *(Tersely)* Did you get it?

ALICE *(producing the jewellery from her pocket)* This was all I had time to get. I have to be careful. This is stuff she doesn't wear much and then, blow me, doesn't she just nearly catch me with it all and ask me about some bracelet. *(She still hides it under her hand or sleeve)*

MONTY This isn't enough.

ALICE I'll try again later.

MONTY You'd better, my girl.

ALICE I'm doing the best I can.

MONTY Your very best, my dear, your very best. If you did, well... *(best Monty leer)* you never know where it could lead for a clever little thing like you, passionate too, as I know. You deserve a real man, not that clown of a brother of mine. *(Alice recoils somewhat from the advancing Monty)* Like to be a Lady would you? Of course you would. Do as you're told and who knows.

Taking the jewellery, Monty exits, smiling to himself. Alice takes a moment to calm down. Before she can leave, John enters. Alice turns to exit and collides with him.

ALICE Beg Pardon, Sir.

JOHN There's no need. Are you all right?

ALICE Thank you. Yes, sir.

John sees the bracelet on her wrist. He recognises the clasp.

JOHN What a pretty bracelet. May I ask where you got it?

ALICE Oh, it's not mine, sir. I was -er- I've been cleaning it for my mistress, sir. I thought this was the best way to make sure I didn't lose it, sir. *(It sounds a bit lame, even to Alice)*

JOHN Really. You'd best get it back to her then. Your mistress is the Lady Caroline Carstaires, isn't it?

ALICE Yes, sir. You know her?

JOHN Not any more.

ALICE I have to go. Excuse me, sir.

JOHN Of course.

Alice exits. By a strange coincidence Caro then enters! She is stunned to see John.



CARO Jack!

JOHN *(He is quite calm)* Caroline. It's been... some time.

CARO Ten years... not since...

JOHN You look well. How is... your husband?

CARO Monty. . oh, Monty is the same as ever. *(Quickly)* Are you travelling... with anyone?

JOHN No. There's no-one but me.

CARO Jack..!

JOHN Yes, Caroline?

CARO How formal you sound. It wasn't always like that between you and me.

JOHN It was your choice, Caro.

CARO We can all make mistakes, Jack.

JOHN I asked you to accept that ten years ago, Caro.

CARO I was different then, times were different.

JOHN *(He moves closer to her and takes hold of her hand).* Let's not fall out all over again. *(As he looks down at her hand and wrist)* What beautiful pearls...

CARO I still have the little gold and pearl bracelet you gave to me, Jack.

JOHN Oh, I know. I just saw your maid with it.

CARO *(pulling her hand away)* You?!.. Alice?!

JOHN If that's her name, yes.

CARO So that's... you must excuse me, Jack.

JOHN Leaving me again, Caro?

CARO I wish –

JOHN Yes... hindsight is a marvellous thing, isn't it? *(He takes hold of her hand again and gently kisses it)* For old times' sake, Caro.

CARO *(She hesitates for a moment, and then kisses him)* For old times' sake, Jack.

She exits quickly, leaving John a little stunned by her action. He shakes his head as though emptying out his thoughts, and then he exits in the opposite direction.

Pest enters, followed a moment later by Freddie. He reluctantly adopts a lover-like approach to Pest, which she finds amusing.

FREDDIE There you are.

PEST So I am.

FREDDIE *(He takes hold of her hand)* Oh, Daphne!

PEST *(Amused and with a sideways conspiratorial glance at the audience).*
Oh, Freddie!

FREDDIE Oh, Daphne, I have been watching you for two whole days now.

PEST You have?

FREDDIE I have.

PEST But we only met today.

FREDDIE What does time matter! I have been captivated by your charm, your beauty...

PEST You have?

FREDDIE I have.

PEST Are you sure?

FREDDIE I am.

PEST You are.

FREDDIE Of course. *(Losing the thread a little already)* Why shouldn't I be?

PEST Well, you see, my name is Penelope.

FREDDIE *(aside)* Damn. Daphne was the last cruise.

PEST Oh, Freddie, you're just...a gigolo.

FREDDIE No, no, how can you say that; not with you, I'm not

PEST Oh, Freddie, I bet you say that to every Tom, Dick and - Daphne!

FREDDIE Oh, dash it Daph - Penelope - *(aside)* that doesn't sound quite right somehow. *(Turning back to Pest)* Oh, dash it all, anyway, darling girl, *(aside)* that's better. *(To Pest)* I'm not.

PEST Not what?

FREDDIE What you said.

PEST Which what I said?

FREDDIE Gigolo!

PEST I'm not. That's you.

FREDDIE That's what I said -I'm not.

PEST No. I just said that.

FREDDIE I know!

PEST So, you admit it then!

FREDDIE *(losing the thread completely now)*. What!?

PEST You're a gigolo!

FREDDIE *(looking harassed and totally out of his depth)* I daren't suggest we start this again. Daph - Penelope. Goodnight, gorgeous one. I'll see you tomorrow. *(He kisses her hand and leaves looking very shaken)*

PEST *(chuckling to herself)* I wonder if it was something I said? *(She exits)*

Monty and John enter at the same time from opposite sides. They come to a halt at a slight distance from each other, for a moment saying nothing. John is quite calm, Monty is very edgy, throughout the dialogue. Wil is quietly watching from one side.

JOHN Good evening, my Lord.

MONTY Jack. Jack Bentham. *(A slight pause)* You look well.

JOHN I am. Life has been good to me.

MONTY So it would seem, by the look of you.

JOHN Thank you. And what about you, Monty? Has life been good to you, since we last met?

MONTY Can't complain.

JOHN Really.

MONTY Absolutely... Caro's with me.

JOHN I know. We... bumped into each other a little earlier.

MONTY Ah... You travelling on business, or pleasure?

JOHN A little of both.

MONTY You went back to Canada after.. er...

JOHN It seemed the sensible thing to do.

MONTY Set up business over there, I imagine.

JOHN Yes, but I have interests elsewhere these days too.

MONTY Pity... about what happened.

JOHN At the time I would have agreed, but time moves on, life moves on. Right now, I'd say I'm exactly where I want to be.

MONTY (*wholly unconvincing*) Jolly good. Well, I must move on... just taking the old constitutional before calling it a day. Can't stay too long or my nightcap will be cold.

JOHN Still the chocolate and brandy?

MONTY (*a little surprised*) Yes.

JOHN Some... things never change.

MONTY No, no indeed. Well, goodnight, Jack.

JOHN Goodbye, Monty.

They cross each other and exit in opposite directions. Wil disappears before they reach him.

Pest enters. She is fiddling with the back of her choker. Some of her hair has caught in it and she is trying to free it. She stops by a deck chair. She gives a harder tug and the hair and the choker separate, breaking the choker. [The actress playing Pest needs to have a number of small pearls in her hand to drop onto the floor/deck. She must also place a couple of pearls on the floor for Wil to 'find' subsequently] She scrambles around on the floor, and under the deck chair trying

to recover her pearls. Perfectly on cue, John enters, faced yet again with Pest's rear view.

JOHN *(with a smile)* Now, there's a familiar face.

PEST *(Hearing his voice and bringing her head up to collide with the deck chair)* Oh, Ow!

JOHN Not spectacles again! *(Helping her to her feet)*

PEST No, pearls, my choker. *(She shows him the wrecked choker).* It was my Mum's.

JOHN If you let me have it, I'll have it fixed for you. Do you have all of the pearls?

PEST I think so, but I don't see why you should repair it for me.

JOHN It'll be my pleasure. *(He holds out his hand for the choker and pearls. Pest gives them all to him. He pockets them)* Do I have to offer you my congratulations yet?

PEST I beg your pardon?

JOHN I thought you were about to get engaged.

PEST *(Pest chuckles)* No, no. I think I've frightened him off.

JOHN I'm relieved to hear it. *(In a more serious tone)* A word of advice, if I may, entangling yourself with the Carstaires can sometimes... well, let's just say that they always look out for themselves, regardless of the cost to others.

PEST Thank you, but you don't need to worry, I'll be alright.

JOHN I believe you will.

PEST *(Reluctantly)* I'd better go.

JOHN I suppose it is getting a little late.

PEST Hmm. Goodnight then, Mr Bentham. And thank you. *(She offers him her hand to shake)*

JOHN *(He takes her hand and holds it as he says...)* Goodnight, Miss Petersham.

Pest withdraws her hand and turns to leave. Not looking or thinking about where she is walking, she falls over the deck chair. John hauls her to her feet.



JOHN You know, as nice as that view of you is, (*straightening her hair and glasses*) I think I prefer this one.

PEST You do!?

JOHN Ahha.

PEST Ohh.

JOHN Goodnight.. Penelope.

PEST Pen.

JOHN I beg... oh, I see.

PEST Goodnight... John. (*She turns to go once more just stopping herself from falling over the deck chair, turns back to John acknowledging what she has nearly done, and then carefully skirting around the chair she exits*).

John removes the pearls from his pocket, looks at them for a moment, thoughtfully, replaces them and exits.

Wil enters. He checks around and under the deckchair. He finds two more pearls. He seems satisfied with his find. He hears someone coming. He pockets them and leaves quickly. Alice enters from the opposite direction. She also looks for any more pearls but can find none. Freddie enters.

FREDDIE Alice!

ALICE Oh, Freddie, I've had just about as much of your family as I can take. What with her ladyship's 'do this, Alice, do that', and his nibs, (*she just stops herself from continuing*)... well, never mind that –

FREDDIE You have! Try being a member of it.

ALICE We've got to do something, Freddie

FREDDIE You're right. Come on. (*He leads her off*)

We hear 1920's dance music in the distance and then a voice bidding everyone goodnight as the music fades away to polite applause. There is silence for a moment and then we hear Alice scream loudly as she runs on to the stage very upset. The other players enter after her, Freddie enters last. Wil keeps discreetly in the background.

ALICE (*As she is running on, and waits for the others to come on stage*) Oh, my God, he's dead, he's dead!

CARO Who? Who's dead? Alice, control yourself, girl!

ALICE Him - his Lordship. Oh, my God! *(Alice can continue to wail and 'Oh my God' throughout this dialogue).*

JOHN I don't think we'll get a lot of sense out of her at the moment.

PEST You're right, John –

CARO *(aghast)* John?! –

PEST Alice, sit down and calm yourself. *(She sits Alice on the edge of the deck chair and hovers over her trying to calm her down)*

ALICE *(to Pest)* It weren't me, Miss, I swear.

PEST Nobody's suggesting it was, Alice. John, perhaps you and Freddie could check to make sure that Monty is actually –

CARO *(still aghast, but fainter)* John! *(louder - enough to be clearly audible to the audience)* What have I done? *(She flops down onto the deckchair the other side of Alice and now we have two of them wailing merrily away!)*

JOHN *(to Pest)* You're right, Pen.

CARO Pen! *(Loud wail)*

As he turns to Freddie to take him with him, Inspector Foot of the Yard enters.

FOOT Don't wish to hintrude but do I detect that something is hamiss?

FREDDIE Who are you?

FOOT Hi'm Inspector Foot of the Yard, sir. *(Flashes warrant card)* What's afoot?

FREDDIE About thirty centimetres.

JOHN Don't be ridiculous - this is the 1920's – it's twelve inches!

PEST Inspector, we think that Lord Montague may have met with – an accident.

FOOT Where?

ALICE His cabin. *(She points offstage, and gives another wail)*

FOOT 'Is cabin, eh... never been too good at anotomy..., atanomy... *(as though to prove the point he makes several abortive attempts to say the word correctly)* ...bodies! But if you'll show me to him, we'll take it from there.

PEST John... *(indicating that he should take Foot to Monty's cabin)*

CARO John!! *(Wail)*

JOHN Of course. Freddie, lead the way, if you would. Inspector... *(indicating that he should follow Freddie off).*

All three men exit.

PEST *(struggling with Caro and Alice)* Wil, don't stand there like a dummy, help me.

WIL *(apologetically)* Sorry Pest. *(He moves to Caro to try to calm her. She flings herself onto his shoulder)* *(To Pest)* What have you been doing?

Pest opens her mouth to answer, but Alice and Caro beat her to it. As one they raise their heads and say...

CARO Nothing! I haven't done anything! *(looking at Pest reproachfully and speaking accusingly)*, John?!

ALICE Nothing! I haven't done nothing! Oh, my God!

They both continue to wail. The men return. Wil moves upstage again, away from the others.

FOOT Lady Carstaires.

CARO *(she stands up)* Where did that nice young man go? *(Bringing her attention back to the matter in hand)* Oh, yes, Inspector?

FOOT Having hestablished the whereabouts of 'is Lordship's cabin, hi 'ave ascertained that foul play has taken place.

FREDDIE Are you accusing my brother of cheating, Inspector?!

FOOT Certainly not. 'E's been murdered!

CARO Inspector, you mean-?

FOOT Yes, I'm afraid 'e's – dead!

They all gasp as one.

FOOT Hi must ask all of you to come along with me now. There are questions to be asked!

There is a general protest, and Alice again declares that she 'ain't done nothing wrong!' with a wail, of course.

FOOT Hi'm afraid Hi must insist. *(Turning to the audience)* And as for you lot... don't think you can go to bed yet, neither. You all look decidedly dodgy to me, *(singling out a member of the audience)* especially you there. It could be a long night. Better get them to open up the kitchen again.

At the mention of food, there is a general stampede by the cast, pushing Foot out of the way, as they exit. Foot follows, with suitable remarks such as 'Oi, you lot, that last doughnut's mine. Hi'm a working man, Hi needs nourishment, I does.'