

Return to Talbot Manor

by Gary Simpson

Author's Note: *Return to Talbot Manor is a sequel. However, although it is hoped that audience members will enjoy seeing characters from The Mystery of Talbot Manor return for a second outing, knowledge of the previous Murdernight is not necessary. From the outset, Return to Talbot Manor has been designed as a stand-alone murder mystery. For that reason – and also because time marches on - many of the characters from the original do not appear in this sequel and new characters have been introduced. The action takes place 5 years after the happenings of The Mystery of Talbot Manor.*

The action takes place within the dark and foreboding main hall of Talbot Manor. Spooky music plays and a storm can be heard outside, punctuated by rolls of thunder and the occasional flash of lightning. As the action begins, Ruby, the highly-strung maid, moves nervously from table to table, dusting and looking about with a terrified air as if expecting something to come leaping from the shadows any minute. The audience are seated around the tables and represent the members of a stranded coach party, caught in the storm, who have stumbled upon Talbot Manor – the only refuge within miles, situated as it is at the centre of a desolate moor. The other member of the cast mingling with the audience is Cringe, the butler. Cringe is monosyllabic, slow and plodding. He moves uneasily from table to table and whenever he speaks he uses one-word answers – ‘Coat’, ‘Drink’, etc. His apparent mental retardation should always leave room for doubt: is there more to Cringe than meets the eye?

Prior to the action proper beginning, Cringe and Ruby leave the hall. Ruby re-enters and moves to the stage area, terrified. She carries a torch but the batteries are spent and she is desperately trying to get it to function.

RUBY *(Terrified, shaking the torch)* Oooh! Work, damn you. Why don't nothing ever work in this place?

Suddenly, there is a loud thud to her right. Ruby jumps her own height, and turns towards the sound.

RUBY Whatwasthat? Is that you, miss? Hello... is there anyone there?

She has not seen Cringe enter and he is standing right behind her.

CRINGE Cringe.

Ruby screams and turns to him.

RUBY Oh... it's you. What you creepin' up on people for like that? You'll be the death of me, so you will.

Cringe laughs. Unseen to Ruby, Frau Schmidt enters silently behind her. She is the housekeeper and has a sinister, aloof bearing. She moves calmly and quietly but exudes an air of menace. There is always the suggestion of a fierce temper underneath the cool façade. This is not someone you would want to antagonise.

SCHMIDT Ruby!

Ruby screams again and turns to face Frau Schmidt.

SCHMIDT What is this noise? I thought I instructed you to prepare the rooms for our... *(looking mysteriously at the audience)* guests.

RUBY Yes, m'm. Sorry, m'm. I've done 50, m'm. I've only got 37* to go. *(Indicating the torch)* I was just having trouble with my bulb.

SCHMIDT Indeed. Cringe will fix the generator. In the meantime, go down to the laboratory, and feed... the thing.

RUBY *(Horried)* No, m'm. Please, m'm. Anythin' but that. Not the master's old laboratory. His spirit's still *there*, m'm, I know it is. All those sounds... and wails... and creepy crawlies, m'm. Don't make me, please...

SCHMIDT *Ruby!*

RUBY *(Resigned to her fate)* Yes, m'm.... Oooooooo....

Resigned to her fate, Ruby exits past Frau Schmidt, trembling, with her hand to her mouth... Frau Schmidt and Cringe are left together.

SCHMIDT You shouldn't tease the staff. Especially one with her... background.

Liberty Talbot breezes in. She is the hostess of Talbot Manor and is dressed to receive guests. It has obviously been a rush and she is pulling on a long glove as she enters. Around her neck she wears an initialed pendant. Liberty speaks with a Southern Belle accent, having spent most of her childhood years in America.

LIBERTY Land's sakes, what is all the commotion down here? Frau Schmidt, I thought I gave explicit instructions that dinnah was to be served for these people at seven thirty. I don't know what that foul smell is comin' from the kitchen, but it sure ain't jambalaya.

* The number here can vary depending on the size of the audience.

SCHMIDT My apologies, Miss Talbot. I'm afraid Cook has had a little accident in the kitchen. Supper may be a little... delayed.

LIBERTY Delayed? *Delayed?* I am sick and tired of your excuses, Frau Schmidt.

Frau Schmidt wipes her eye.

LIBERTY Fortunately I ain't gonna have to put up with them much longah. When I say I want dinnah at seven thirty, I mean seven thirty, and a not a moment longah.

SCHIMDT *(Sweetly)* Of course. I'll have the mess cleared up at once. *(Turning to Cringe)* Cringe... Cook has had a little accident in the kitchen. *(A pause)* Go and cut her down, will you?

CRINGE Cut... knife...

Cringe gives a little inward chuckle and exits.

SCHMIDT I apologise for the inconvenience, Miss Talbot. It might be easier to comply with your requests if we had more staff. Might I remind you that since Rodgers' accident with the hedge-trimmer we've been a little short-handed.

LIBERTY Frau Schmidt...

Frau Schmidt wipes her eye.

LIBERTY You know as well as I do that no-one has answered my advertisement in the past three years. And no wondah... who in their right mind would want to come to this dead-and-alive hole? I've seen their faces in the village. I've see them pointin' at me and whisperin'. There she goes... the Talbot woman. Her brother went mad before he died, committing unspeakable acts in that there laboratory of his. Well, Frau Schmidt, I shain't have to put up with it much longah. I have a buyah. And tomorrow, Old Mr. Wetherby is coming here so's I can sign the documents and finally have Talbot Manor taken off my hands.

SCHMIDT But you can't be serious! This house has been in the Talbot family for generations...

LIBERTY Oh, Ah'm serious, all right. Deadly serious... Frau Schmidt.

Frau Schmidt wipes her eye.

SCHMIDT But what of Ruby... and Cringe?

LIBERTY Oh, I've taken care of all the members of the Talbot family, don't you worry your little head. As for the others, I doubt that my American buyah will be looking for a moth-eaten old housekeeper and neurotic maid.

SCHMIDT You can't do this!

LIBERTY Oh, cain't I? Just you wait. There ain't no thing or no body cain stop me now.

The doorbell rings a macabre chime.

LIBERTY Now, who cain *that be*? I thought the bridge was down and we were all stranded here.

Dr Stringer enters. He has the air of an undertaker but is in fact the doctor in charge of the local asylum. As he enters he is taking down an umbrella, but the moisture on the shoulders of his coat betray the strength of the storm outside. He is closely followed by Truscott, a male psychiatric nurse who wears a white T-shirt and short white coat. As well as carrying a briefcase, he too is folding up a large, wet black umbrella, but is careful not to avert his attention too far from the third member of the party, an introverted and withdrawn soul who enters barely visible under the collar of his large coat. This is Mason Talbot, the eldest brother of Liberty, who has just been released from Dr. Stringer's institution. Cringe follows close behind.

During the following lines, Stringer hands his umbrella to Cringe, who looks at it then flings it on the floor. Truscott also hands his umbrella to Cringe, which meets the same fate. Cringe reaches for the briefcase, but Truscott makes it quite clear he is keeping hold of it.

STRINGER *My God, what a night! I thought we would never get here. (He looks round at Mason) Well... come on in, dear chap. No need to be afraid. They won't bite, you know.*

LIBERTY *(recognising Mason) Saints alive! It cain't be...*

STRINGER Ah, Miss Talbot. Please forgive our tardy arrival. Unfortunately our car became bogged down in the swamp and despite our best efforts Truscott and I were unable to extricate it. We proceeded on foot, albeit with some difficulty.

LIBERTY *(Composing herself) Doctor Stringer... this is most unexpected, and if you'll forgive me, a tad inopportune.*

STRINGER My, how awkward. You received my letter?

LIBERTY *(Confused) Why, no, I...*

SCHMIDT I'm afraid it has been some time since we received mail, Doctor. The G.P.O. have attempted to effect delivery several times, but on each occasion the postman has vanished without trace, consumed by the treacherous marshes.

STRINGER Ah. Hence the bikes. *(To Frau Schmidt)* And you are...?

SCHMIDT I am Miss Talbot's housekeeper, Doctor. Frau Schmidt.

Stringer wipes his eye.

STRINGER Indeed. You are familiar with the house?

SCHMIDT Naturally, sir. I have been housekeeper at Talbot Manor for nearly twenty-five years.

STRINGER Excellent. *(To Liberty)* I should very much enjoy a tour of the Manor if it were convenient, Miss Talbot. *(Looking at Frau Schmidt)* Especially if Frau Schmidt were to guide me.

LIBERTY Doctor Stringer... this is hardly an ideal moment for guided tours... *(looking at Mason)* or unexpected visitors.

STRINGER Oh... Mason is not visiting, Miss Talbot.

On hearing the name Mason, Frau Schmidt – and to a lesser extent Cringe – react.

LIBERTY What?

STRINGER No. I have discharged your brother from the asylum.

MASON *(Taking a step forward)* Yes, Liberty, it's true. I've come home.

Mason's sudden movement forward causes a reflex reaction in Truscott, who also takes an admonishing half-step forward.

TRUSCOTT *(To Mason)* Steady, you...

STRINGER *(To Truscott)* It's all right. *(To Liberty)* You must forgive Truscott, Miss Talbot. Old habits die hard, and he has tended to your brother throughout his... stay with us, including those times when he was at his most... *(He searches vainly for the word)*

LIBERTY Unhinged?

STRINGER *(Sweetly)* Quite. But as you can see, through the advances of modern medicine, he has quite... improved.

LIBERTY *Improved?* Doctor, five years ago you said my brother was a dangerous murderous psychopath who had to be committed for the public's safety as well as his own. Have you forgotten how many women disappeared from the village?

STRINGER Miss Talbot... that was five years ago. Circumstances have changed... *he* has changed... as long as he takes his medication regularly, Mason Talbot is perfectly safe, I assure you.

LIBERTY Safe?

STRINGER As houses.

LIBERTY Not a danger?

STRINGER No.

LIBERTY You're sure he ain't gonna kill us all in our beds?

STRINGER Miss Talbot, your brother has undergone numerous courses of electro convulsive therapy, radical drug treatments und psychotherapy. During extensive tests conducted by men at the cutting edge of modern psychiatry your brother has failed to demonstrate a single aggressive impulse.

LIBERTY If you're certain...

STRINGER I am.

LIBERTY All right then. *(Indicating Truscott's briefcase)* What's in the briefcase?

STRINGER A straitjacket. Just in case.

LIBERTY That's it! I ain't having him under my roof.

SCHMIDT Madam... the bridge is down. There is nowhere for them to go.

LIBERTY *(Seeing there is nothing for it)* All right... but only for one night. Cringe will take your things.

Cringe has positioned himself behind Stringer.

CRINGE Coat.

STRINGER Thank you, I think...

CRINGE Coat.

STRINGER It's quite chilly, I'd rather...

Cringe begins to forcefully remove Stringer's coat anyway.

CRINGE Coat. Coat. Coat.

STRINGER Yes, well... if you insist.

Cringe throws the coat down.

STRINGER So you are Cringe, eh?

CRINGE Cringe.

STRINGER Even better. There will be time for you and Truscott to get acquainted. I don't think we'll have any trouble, do you, Truscott?

TRUSCOTT *(Sizing Cringe up menacingly)* Oh, no – I don't think so, Doctor Stringer. No trouble at all.

MASON I wouldn't be too sure if I were you, Mr. Truscott. Cringe is stronger than he looks. I should know.

Truscott immediately glares menacingly at Mason.

TRUSCOTT Oh yeah?

Mason recoils away. Truscott's voice softens as he looks at Liberty. During this exchange he subtly notices the pendant around Liberty's neck.

TRUSCOTT Don't you worry, miss. I'll make sure that there's no trouble from nobody. You'll sleep sound tonight.

SCHMIDT Shall I have Ruby make up Master Mason's old room, Miss?

Mason immediately recoils.

MASON *(Just holding on, stirred by a traumatic memory)* No... no... not there. Not the old room... not that...

Truscott and Cringe both react, ready to step in if there is any 'trouble'.

SCHMIDT I meant Master Mason's *old* room, Miss... before he became... incapacitated. The laburnum suite.

LIBERTY Yes. That should be far enough. Why don't you take him there... yourself. Cringe will help you. We wouldn't want him to wander off like old times...

TRUSCOTT I'll come with you. Just in case.

Cringe, Truscott, Frau Schmidt and Mason begin to move off. Mason stops and turns back.

MASON Liberty...

Liberty looks at him.

MASON It's good to be home. I've been looking forward to this for a very, very long time.

Truscott pulls him off and the four exit. Liberty is left with Dr Stringer.

LIBERTY You know he cain't stay here.

STRINGER I'm afraid there was nothing else I could do. The trustees contacted me on Monday. We close at the end of the month. Of course, I'll be pleased to take him back, once things are set up here. It shouldn't take much convincing to have him re-committed. Truscott will be pleased. He does so enjoy his little torments.

LIBERTY Yes... about that. I'm afraid there has been a change of plan.

STRINGER What?

LIBERTY I'm afraid so. You see, I have an associate who works in Universal Studios. Hollywood. Apparently they've been lookin' for someplace just like this and... well, they made me a *very* fine offer.

STRINGER You haven't accepted?

LIBERTY Of course. We sign tomorrow.

STRINGER But you promised...

LIBERTY Doctor Stringer, honey, surely a man of your intelligence is aware that a promise is only worth the paper it isn't printed on. I'm sorry, but I've quite made up my mind. I'm takin' the money and gettin' outta here.

STRINGER We had an agreement.

LIBERTY Uh-huh. But *I've* got the house.

STRINGER *(After a pause)* That's what you think.

LIBERTY What do you mean?

STRINGER You only have Talbot Manor because your elder brother was declared insane. But now Mason is back, Miss Talbot. Talbot Manor is rightfully his. Or at least, I'm sure Old Wetherby will agree with me. The poor fellow – the legal profession does take its toll. He's been behaving quite strangely lately, I hear. Maybe he needs a little time out to convalesce.

LIBERTY You *fiend*. You wouldn't dare!

STRINGER Oh, wouldn't I?

Ruby runs in, in a flap.

RUBY Oh, M'm... M'm... It's *him*... I've seen him.

LIBERTY Who? What have you seen?

RUBY The Master! Master Marcus... with Frau Schmidt, m'm. He... he...

STRINGER Calm yourself, Ruby. Remember what I taught you.

RUBY Dr Stringer?

Dr Stringer nods. Ruby immediately becomes quite timid and docile, like a child before her headmaster.

RUBY I'm sorry, sir... I'll be a good girl, sir.

STRINGER That man was not Marcus Talbot, Ruby - but Mason, his twin brother. Marcus is dead, Ruby. You have nothing to fear.

RUBY No, sir. Yes, sir. If you say so, sir. *(Gasps)* There 'e is...

Ruby gasps as she sees Frau Schmidt enter, accompanied by Cringe and Truscott. Significantly, Mason is with them. Truscott recognises Ruby at once.

SCHMIDT Calm yourself, Ruby... this is Master Mason... he has come to stay for a while.

Ruby gives a slight curtsey.

RUBY If you say so, m'm...

LIBERTY Ruby, if you have not completed seeing to the rooms I suggest you do so. Frau Schmidt, perhaps you would be so good as to show Dr Stringer to his room.

SCHMIDT Of course, Miss. I have one all prepared in... the West Wing.

There is a crack of thunder.

LIBERTY I thought we weren't usin'... the West Wing.

Another crack of thunder.

SCHMIDT In view of the need for accommodation, Miss, I took the liberty of re-opening the... West Wing.

Another crack of thunder.

SCHMIDT Cringe has removed the stains.

LIBERTY Very well. In the meantime, I shall try and think how to entertain all these guests.

SCHMIDT We could always have Cringe don his lederhosen.

Everyone turns slowly to look at Cringe, visualising the scene. Cringe pauses for a second then bends forward slightly, slaps his thighs twice, claps his hands together, does a little leap, slaps the sole of his left shoe with his right hand, and gestures to the audience awaiting the imagined rapturous applause. Everyone turns back again.

LIBERTY Perhaps not.

SCHMIDT Perhaps Cringe might like to show Master Mason his father's laboratory. It might bring back a few... more pleasant memories.

MASON Oh, yes... I should like that very much. Please, Liberty...

LIBERTY Very well. You'll find it just as Marcus left it. For some reason Cringe and Frau Schmidt seem intent on preservin' our brother's memory. He built up quite a collection over the years. *(Glancing at Frau Schmidt)* I don't see no harm in you lookin' at it one last time. *(To Mason)* But take care, now, Mason. We wouldn't want anythin' to happen to you down there... just as we were gettin'... re-acquainted.

Liberty exits. Cringe follows, with Mason close behind. Truscott begins to follow but is checked by Dr Stringer.

STRINGER No, it's all right, Truscott. Mason is quite safe with Cringe.

TRUSCOTT I was thinking more the other way round, sir. You know what Talbot's like... the...

STRINGER Oh, Cringe is quite safe too. He can handle himself... and Mason. He has many times before.

MASON All water under the bridge, doctor. I'll look after Cringe. Don't worry.

CRINGE Come... Master... see...

Cringe leads Mason off.

SCHMIDT May I take you to your room, Doctor?

STRINGER Of course. Frau Schmidt... I was wondering... all those years that Cringe looked after Mason... where did you keep him?

SCHMIDT The West Wing.

There is a crack of thunder. *Stringer reacts. Frau Schmidt and Dr Stringer exit, leaving Ruby and Truscott together. They are uncomfortable in each other's presence. They have met before.*

RUBY I thought it was you.

TRUSCOTT You never wrote.

RUBY Tried to... but that place... too many memories.

TRUSCOTT I thought of you... often.

RUBY You never said you was going.

TRUSCOTT I had to try and find her. After three months, I came back, but you'd gone.

RUBY Mother knew someone... put in a word for me, and I came here.

TRUSCOTT How do you stand it? Gives me the creeps.

RUBY Lucky to get this place. What with... you know. Which room they put you in?

TRUSCOTT Hemlock. Next to... *(Looking in the direction Mason has gone)* him.

RUBY I thought he was safe.

TRUSCOTT They're never really safe... none of them, not completely.

RUBY *(A little disconcerted)* Even me?

TRUSCOTT You was different, Ruby.

The doorbell rings its macabre chime once more. They look intently at each other.

TRUSCOTT Ruby... do you think we...?

Ruby puts her hand up to Truscott's lips to quiet him.

RUBY I'll bring you a little something tonight... keep your feet warm.

The doorbell rings again. Cringe enters, followed by Mason.

CRINGE Door.

Cringe shuffles across the stage, and in doing so passes Ruby, who has her back to him. As he reaches her, he leans toward her. He is carrying a large spider.

CRINGE *(To Ruby)* Boo. *(He chuckles)*

RUBY *(seeing the spider)* Aaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhh!

TRUSCOTT Leave her alone.

Cringe hides the spider.

MASON Leave *him* alone.

TRUSCOTT *(To Mason)* You keep out of it. *(To Cringe)* And just you wait. As soon as that Liberty woman signs the papers, you're mine.

The doorbell rings again.

RUBY What do you mean?

Frau Schmidt enters. She has overheard the conversation.

SCHMIDT He means that Miss Talbot has decided to sell Talbot Manor, Ruby. I appears you and I are to be thrown on to the streets, and Cringe placed in to the tender care of Mr. Truscott here.

CRINGE No... *(He flinches away from Truscott)*

MASON She wouldn't dare.

SCHMIDT I'm afraid so, Master Mason. Ruby... we'll discuss this later. In the meantime, attend to your work. And I suggest, Mr. Truscott, you attend to yours.

RUBY Yes, m'm.

Ruby makes to leave, running past Frau Schmidt. Before she leaves...

TRUSCOTT Don't worry, Ruby. I won't let nothing happen to you. *(He makes to go, the opposite way from Ruby)* I promise.

Ruby and Truscott exit. The doorbell rings again.

SCHMIDT Cringe... the door.

Cringe makes to go.

CRINGE Door.

Before he gets there, Dr Harriet Finch enters. She is a retired GP, and is dressed for a walking holiday – in tweeds. On her back is a small rucksack.

HARRIET Hello. Door was open so I thought I'd just come in. Don't suppose you remember me – the name's Ffinch. Harriet Ffinch.

During the next few lines, Harriet moves along the line, thrusting her hand out to all and sundry to shake hands. So forceful is she that all do so, even Cringe, without thought for their social position. After Cringe, she shakes hands with Frau Schmidt but stops before reaching Mason.

HARRIET Pardon the intrusion. Suddenly remembered I'd left my broolly.

SCHMIDT But that was five years ago, Dr Ffinch.

HARRIET Was it really? Thought we'd had a dry spell.

SCHMIDT The night Marcus Talbot died.

HARRIET Of course. Electrocuted, wasn't he? Shocking.

SCHMIDT Please, Dr. Ffinch. (*Glancing at Mason*) The memory is still quite... hard to bear.

HARRIET Course. Didn't mean to dwell on it. (*A pause*) Still remember his blackened smoldering carcass though. Some images never leave your...

SCHMIDT This is Marcus's brother... Mason Talbot.

HARRIET (*Thrusting out her hand*) Harriet Ffinch. I say... you're homozygous.

MASON I beg your pardon?

HARRIET Identical twin. (*Studying his face*) Fascinating.

SCHMIDT How did you come to be in the area, Dr. Ffinch?

HARRIET Ah. Day I retired from practice, thought to myself, 'Harriet, old girl,' I thought, 'got to keep active', so a few of the gels and myself formed the D.T.s – Dartmoor Trudgers. Out on a hike to Widecombe, felt a spot of rain and suddenly thought... broolly!

MASON Widecombe? That's thirty miles.

HARRIET No problem for the D.T.'s! Few lungsful of country air and tally-ho!

SCHMIDT It's amazing you weren't sucked into the swamp.

HARRIET Yes, got a bit boggy but we trudged on, didn't we, gels? (*She looks behind her, but no-one is there*) Gels? (*A pause*) Bother. Still, plenty more at home.

MASON Alas, Dr. Ffinch, I fear the storm will hamper your efforts to return home tonight.

HARRIET I know... isn't it thrilling. I haven't seen lightning like this since... since the last time I was here. It's just like something out of an Agatha Christie... (*To Mason*) My passion, you know... detective novels.

MASON Dr. Ffinch, I'm afraid you cannot risk safe passage across the moor again a second time. I'm sure I speak for my sister when I offer you the hospitality of Talbot Manor.

HARRIET Your sister?

MASON Liberty Talbot.

HARRIET Ah, yes. I recall. Is she around? I'm dying to meet her.

SCHMIDT I'll have Cringe look for her. Cringe, take Dr Ffinch's bag to the Ivy Room.

Cringe moves to Harriet and reaches for her rucksack. As he takes his hand out of his pocket, he inadvertently produces the spider.

HARRIET Thank you, I... *(seeing the spider)* Ooo, I say... what a fascinating specimen.

CRINGE Huh?

HARRIET Forgive me... entomology, another of my passions. You know, on my way here I saw a *pirata piraticus* and a *salticus scenicus*, but I've never seen one quite like this. What's it called?

CRINGE Gerald.

Cringe pockets the spider, then reaches for Harriet's rucksack.

CRINGE Bag.

HARRIET What?

CRINGE Bag... bag...

HARRIET *(Removing the rucksack)* Oh. Of course.

She hands the rucksack to Cringe, who takes it and is just about to go, but before he does...

CRINGE *(to the audience, indicating Harriet)* Bag.

Cringe exits.

MASON Do I take it you met my brother, Dr Ffinch? I must show you his laboratory. You'd never want to leave.

HARRIET My dear fellow, I've seen it. And your brother... it was a pleasure to meet him. He had a wonderful mind.

MASON Do you think so?

HARRIET Oh, yes... *(indicating with her hands)* it was about this size, I saw it at post mortem. I like to think that, in a small way, I helped to track down your brother's murderer.

MASON I didn't realise you were a police surgeon.

HARRIET What, me? Oh no... why apart from your brother's case, I've never... *(pauses briefly to think)* well... there were the McKenzie murders, of course, the case of the Campden poisoner and that small incident in Safeways, but apart from that, I haven't had any dealings with the police.

Suddenly Cringe appears. He is upset.

CRINGE Police!

HARRIET Yes, that's right. Police.

CRINGE Mistress. Liberty. Murdered.

ALL What?

Dr Stringer appears. Truscott appears a second afterward, from the other side of the stage. Ruby enters from the same side a moment later.

STRINGER I say... what's the commotion?

SCHIMDT If Cringe is right, Doctor Stringer, it would appear that Miss Talbot has been... murdered.

Ruby screams.

TRUSCOTT *(advancing on Mason)* I told you, sir! I told you it was too soon to let him loose! But you wouldn't listen...

MASON But I swear...

TRUSCOTT *(Grabbing Mason by the arms)* Why, you murdering...

Ruby falls in a faint.

TRUSCOTT Ruby! *(He rushes over to her and frantically tries to bring her round)*

HARRIET I say! It looks as if I've appeared just in the nick of time. *(To the audience)* Ladies and gentlemen, with my clinical know-how and knowledge of police methods, I might just be able to solve this mystery, but I'll need your help. I don't know about you, but I'm

starved. (*Looking at the suspects*) Obviously nobody is going anywhere. While you have something to eat, I'll go and examine the body. Oh... and be careful... you never know, she might have been poisoned...

Harriet leads the cast off. Ruby is revived and helped off by Frau Schmidt and Cringe. Truscott takes custody of Mason and Dr Stringer walks behind.