

The Mystery of Talbot Manor

by Gary Simpson

*The dark and foreboding main hall at Talbot Manor. A storm is brewing outside and the rain is already beginning to fall. **Thunder can be heard in the distance.** Perhaps the occasional lightning flash. To add insult to injury, the electricity has blown again, and the entire hall is dimly lit with candlelight. As the scene opens, Cringe, the butler and Ruby, the parlour maid, are doing their best to accommodate some unexpected guests. The audience are members of a coach party who have had to abandon their coach when the nearby bridge fell into the murky swamp, swept away by the storm water. Cringe is slow, plodding, monosyllabic. His features are mask-like: the lights are on but no one is home. However, at times there are flashes which incline one to feel that he is not as stupid as he looks. Cringe provides tea, coffee, drinks; he tends to walk uncomfortably close to people before speaking, and usually one word - 'Drink?' or 'Coat'. Ruby is the new maid. She is openly terrified of her surroundings and goes from table to table saying so, dusting rather ineffectually with the cloth in her hand. After the audience settle, the action begins with the entrance of Lawrence Wetherby, the solicitor. He is rather wet after coming in from the rain, and carries a briefcase. He is met almost immediately, or at least at his walking pace, by Cringe, the butler.*

CRINGE Coat.

WETHERBY Ah, Cringe. Verbose as ever. The electricity has gone again, I see. It's made it rather chilly. I think I'll leave it on for now, if you don't mind.

CRINGE Coat.

WETHERBY Is your master home yet? I wanted to have a few words with him before...

Cringe proceeds to forcefully remove the coat from Wetherby, who is torn between staying upright and holding on to his briefcase. Finally, the coat is off.

CRINGE *(as he removes it)* Coat... coat... coat!

WETHERBY Yes, well, now you mention it, it is getting a little warm in here.

Cringe flings the coat down on the floor.

WETHERBY *(after a momentary pause)* Splendid.

Cringe begins to reach for the case, but Wetherby protects it purposefully.



WETHERBY Ah, ah, ah! No, no, the case stays with me.

CRINGE Case.

WETHERBY *(Very condescendingly, monosyllabic to make sure Cringe understands)* No.... not case.

Cringe begins to walk away to wherever it is that butlers walk to.

CRINGE *(Aside, to audience, indicating Wetherby)* Not case.

Before Wetherby has a chance to draw breath Ruby enters all in a flap.

RUBY Oh, Mr Wetherby, sir, thank Heaven you're here, sir. I can't stand it, sir, not another moment....

WETHERBY Ruby, Ruby... calm yourself, my dear. Nothing could be that bad.

RUBY *(looking around distractedly, dusting Wetherby with her duster as she speaks)* But you don't understand, sir. It's the noises, sir. There's creaks.... and there's moans... and there's manacle laughter, sir.

WETHERBY I'm sure it's just the wind, Ruby.

RUBY *(looking at her abdomen and then up again)* No, sir. It's more than that sir. I've 'eard 'em sir, in the middle of the night... wailin'... and screamin'... and *(voice suddenly deepening)* ...it's *not right*, sir.

WETHERBY Come on, Ruby, pull yourself together. When your mother asked me if I knew of any suitable positions for you I told her it wasn't easy to find a job for someone with your background. You promised that you'd stay at least a month under Frau Schmidt.

Unbeknownst to Ruby, during the next speech Frau Schmidt, the stern housekeeper - and her boss - enters and comes to stand behind her.

RUBY *(wiping her eye in reaction to the spray which emanated on the mention of the word 'Schmidt' - a running gag)* Don't mention 'er to me, sir. She'd crack her face if she smiled and no mistake.

SCHMIDT Ruby!

Ruby screams and leaps into Wetherby's arms.

SCHMIDT Ruby. Put Mr Wetherby down.

Ruby dismounts from Mr Wetherby.

RUBY Yes, 'm. Sorry m'm.

SCHMIDT Isn't it about time you finished cleaning... the west wing?

RUBY *(terrified)* No, m'm.... not... the west wing!

SCHMIDT Yes, Ruby.... The west wing.

Ruby exits, wailing.

WETHERBY You shouldn't be so hard on her. There's enough insanity in this house without you adding to it.

SCHMIDT Why are we wasting time talking about that stupid girl? *Kiss me.*

*They do so. Immediately **there is a crack of thunder.***

SCHMIDT We shouldn't. He might see.

WETHERBY I'm not worried about Talbot. One day I'll deal with him and take you away from all this, just you wait.

Another crack of thunder and a very loud scream.

WETHERBY What was that?

SCHMIDT *(A little guiltily)* It's... it's nothing.

WETHERBY It's Talbot, isn't it? He's down in that laboratory of his again. *(Angrily, moving as if to go down there)* The fiend...

SCHMIDT Wait... you mustn't. You don't understand... you don't know what he's capable of.

WETHERBY Don't I? Maybe you haven't heard the news... there were another three disappearances last night.

SCHMIDT What?

WETHERBY Another three women vanished from the village.

SCHMIDT No.

WETHERBY Yes. And I've a damned good idea where they are. I'm not afraid. I'm going to go down there right now and...

MARCUS And *what*, Mr Wetherby?

There is another loud crack of thunder. Suddenly there is a figure on the stairwell. The tall gaunt figure of the head of the family, Marcus Talbot. He is carrying a candelabra and keeps his right hand firmly in the pocket of his smoking jacket. During the next couple of lines Cringe reappears from another doorway, pacing himself to be in position when Marcus calls

WETHERBY Well, I er... that is I mean, er...

MARCUS (*descending towards the others*) I thought so. You lawyers are all the same. All words and no action. You can write reams on a topic but when you examine them more closely you find they're a bit like the author - insubstantial and rather unimportant.

WETHERBY Why, you... (*he is obviously angry, but suddenly remembers something and holds back*)

MARCUS You should read some of Mr Wetherby's work sometime, my dear. I'm sure the police would like to. Forgive me for interrupting this touching scene, but it appears we have some important visitors who require the services of Frau Schmidt.

Wetherby wipes his eye. Frau Schmidt understands the cryptic message and makes for the stairs.

MARCUS I take it you have the documents.

WETHERBY Of course.

MARCUS Excellent. (*Shouting*) Cringe!

He is already right behind him.

CRINGE Mas-ter.

MARCUS The electrical storms we get on Talbot Hill are quite exceptional, Mr Wetherby. That's why my grandfather built the Manor House here all those years ago. And it's a beautiful evening.

Another loud crack of thunder.

There is of course no question of you driving back in this weather. The bridges are down and we wouldn't want you to

have... an accident. Cringe will take you to your room. In... the east wing.

Cringe makes for Wetherby's case again.

WETHERBY (to Cringe) Ah, ah, ah!

Cringe mocks him by laughing.

CRINGE Come. Room.

Cringe leads Wetherby to the stairs. As they do so, Marcus, with his back to them, is left alone. Confident he can no longer be seen, he briefly removes his right hand from his smoking jacket pocket to discover that it is trembling violently. He clasps it with his left hand in an attempt to stop it and clenches his teeth in frustration. At the same time, Cringe and Wetherby are almost bowled over by Ruby, who re-enters all of a flap and white as a sheet. Cringe and Wetherby exit, Ruby moves towards Talbot, not really seeing him until he turns to face her. She screams.

MARCUS Yes?

RUBY Mr T... t... t...

MARCUS What?

RUBY In the w... w... w...

MARCUS What is it?

RUBY There's a b... a b... a.... Oooooohh...

She faints.

MARCUS You just can't get the staff these days. Cringe!

Cringe appears at the top of the stairs.

CRINGE Mas-ter?

MARCUS (Indicating Ruby, who is flat out) Clear this up. If you need me, I'll be in my study.

*Marcus heads for the stairs, and crosses with Cringe who comes to pick up Ruby. At first he struggles to lift her head and shoulders but she is too heavy. Ruby flops like a rag doll. Suddenly, there **is the sound of an ancient doorpull** and with a seemingly reflex action, Cringe drops Ruby with a thud and proceeds to the door.*

CRINGE Door.

After Cringe has moved off a little, Ruby begins to come to. A little groggy at first. Frau Schmidt re-enters and sees Ruby's predicament.

SCHMIDT Ruby...

RUBY *(coming to slowly)* Oh, Frau Schmidt. m'm, I'm sorry, m'm... I can't go on, m'm, really I can't. It's doin' me head in, and that's a fact.

SCHMIDT You stupid girl. I knew I should have trusted my instincts and given the job to someone a little more... stable.

RUBY It's not that, m'm, I'm all right now... it's this *place*... it gives me the creeps, m'm, all dark an' dismal. The lights haven't worked more than five minutes since I got 'ere... then there's all them cracklin's and creakin's in the night, m'm, comin' from the master's laboratory. What he does wif all them machines, m'm, I don't know, it's not right, m'm...

SCHMIDT How do you know about Mr Talbot's laboratory...?

RUBY *(hesitantly)* Well, m'm, I took the electrician there this morning, m'm.

SCHMIDT *(advancing on her, threateningly)* Listen to me, Ruby. On no account are to enter the master's laboratory without my say-so, do you understand? Those machines are priceless. Unless, of course, you would like the master to give you a *personal* demonstration...

Ruby whimpers.

RUBY *(a squeak)* No, m'm.

SCHMIDT *(reminding her of the job she was doing)* The west wing.

RUBY *(pointing the way)* The west wing... yes, m'm.

Another crack of thunder. *Ruby exits, wailing more softly, but terrified nevertheless. As she leaves, Cringe enters by the main entrance, followed by Liberty Talbot and her boyfriend Thaddeus Kent. Liberty is well dressed, with a small hat and a mink stole. Their car has broken down a distance down the road and she has had to walk through marshy ground. Thaddeus is obviously American and wears a Stetson, denim shirt with bootlace tie, cowboy boots. He carries a large case with*

some difficulty. Both speak with an American accent, but Liberty's sounds natural, Thaddeus's sounds fake.

LIBERTY What an absolute disaster. I swear we shall never manage to extricate the car from that swamp. Thaddeus, I want you to phone the meteorological office first thing in the morning and have that fellow fired. Sunny spells with light drizzle, my eye. These shoes may never recover.

THADDEUS I'll get on to it first thing in the morning, honey.

LIBERTY *(to Frau Schmidt)* And who are you?

SCHMIDT I am the housekeeper, madam. Frau Schmidt.

Liberty wipes her eye. During the next few lines of dialogue Thaddeus, who is standing behind Liberty, becomes increasingly aware of the penetrating gaze of Cringe, who is studying him intently. At first, he tries to ignore the fact that Cringe is watching him, but becomes increasingly unable to do so.

LIBERTY Well, if you're the housekeeper, honey and this is your *house* you can *keep* it. I swear I never saw such a dead and alive hole-in-the ground. I wonder if you can help us here? Me and my beau Thaddeus are lookin' for a quaint little English house around heres somewheres called Talbot Manor.

SCHMIDT This is Talbot Manor.

LIBERTY What? *This* is Talbot Manor? But that cain't be.

SCHMIDT Madam, I have been housekeeper here at Talbot Manor for many years. *(a little venomous)* And who, pray tell, are you?

LIBERTY Why, Frau whoever you are, I am Liberty Talbot, soon to be owner of this here establishment, just as soon as we've heard the contents of the will of my dear departed brother. My card.

Liberty produces a business card and hands it to Frau Schmidt.

SCHMIDT *(a little taken aback but recovering quickly)* I see. *(She hands back the card)*

LIBERTY Oh, keep it, honey. I've got hundreds, haven't I, Thaddeus? ... Thaddeus? Thaddeus, what are you doing?

THADDEUS I'm sorry, Liberty honey, but this butler fella seems to have taken a shine to me... Mr. er.....?

CRINGE Cringe.

THADDEUS Cringe.

Cringe reaches for the first of the cases.

CRINGE Case.

THADDEUS Uh-uh, fella. This here case isn't no feather duster. Why don't you let me...

Cringe lifts the case Thaddeus has been struggling with embarrassing ease, and makes for the stairs.

THADDEUS Well, I'll be darned.

CRINGE *(to Liberty)* Room.

THADDEUS You go ahead, honey. I'll join you in a couple of minutes. I want to discuss how we're gonna get the car removed from the swamp with Frau Schmidt.

Liberty wipes her eye.

SCHMIDT Don't worry, sir. I'll have Cringe dive for it in the morning.

There is a brief pause as everyone stares at Cringe trying to visualise the scenario.

CRINGE Scuba.

Cringe makes for the stairs, taking the case.

LIBERTY Okay, honey, I'll let you hammer out the details while I see to our rooms. *(Suggestively)* Don't be too long. It looks as if they're havin' problems with the heatin'.

She follows Cringe to the stairs, leaving Thaddeus with Frau Schmidt. They wait until they have gone out of sight then...

SCHMIDT What do you think you're doing, bringing her here? That *wasn't* what we had agreed.

In the next few lines Thaddeus's accent slips completely.

THADDEUS I know, but... well... it didn't quite work out like we thought. I mean Liberty is such a kind, generous, *wonderful* human being....

SCHMIDT She's a *Talbot!* Don't you understand what this means? With her here it'll ruin *everything!*

THADDEUS But you don't understand... I love her.

SCHMIDT (*Absolutely aghast*) No!

Another crash of thunder. *Marcus Talbot has appeared, dressed as before, at the top of the stairs.*

MARCUS Another touching scene? Really, you must be careful, or Mr Wetherby will be getting jealous, Frau Schmidt.

By the end of the line Marcus has reached Frau Schmidt and Thaddeus. Frau Schmidt wipes her eye.

MARCUS I don't think we've been introduced.

THADDEUS (*His fake American accent restored*) Thaddeus Kent, sir, at your service.

Thaddeus makes to shake hands with Marcus, who keeps his right hand firmly in his smoking jacket pocket.

MARCUS Of course you are. Pardon me, but your face seems strangely familiar... have we met?

SCHMIDT Mr Kent's car has broken down in the swamp, sir. He is accompanying a lady who claims to be... connected to the house in some way... a Miss Liberty Talbot.

Marcus is visibly shaken.

MARCUS Liberty? *Here?* How... inconvenient. (*Recovering fast, looking at the audience*) And we only told cook to expect 80* for dinner.

THADDEUS If you'll excuse me I'll think I'll just go and find Liberty right now. She went off with that fellow Cringe and frankly, he gives me the creeps.

With a rather disdainful look he brushes past Marcus and Frau Schmidt and makes for the stairs.

* The number mentioned here can be based on the number in the audience that evening.

SCHMIDT What are we going to do?

MARCUS Do? My dear Frau Schmidt... nothing. If Liberty has decided to break her little exile and return to the family home then we shall have to ensure that she is made comfortable during her stay here. So comfortable... that she should never, ever want to leave.

SCHMIDT *(afraid)* I know that look. I'll have no part of it - none, do you hear? Haven't I already done enough?

During the next line, Cringe re-enters and begins to make for the door. He should reach Talbot and Frau Schmidt just as his name is mentioned.

MARCUS My dear Frau Schmidt, never leave a job half-done. *(Suddenly losing his cool and showing a hint of irrational aggression)* You fool. Don't you realise how close we are? Soon I shall have all the money we need to conclude my experiments and *finally* free me from this dreaded curse. You've gone too far to turn back now. Remember Cringe...

The door chimes emanate again, just as Cringe reaches the stage.

CRINGE Door.

MARCUS *(Openly)* Who could that be now? *(More secretively, to Frau Schmidt)* Did you attend to that... little business I mentioned earlier?

SCHMIDT Don't worry. Cringe and I made sure there won't be a recurrence of last night.

MARCUS Excellent.

Suddenly, Dr Harriet Ffinch sweeps in. She is dressed appropriately for a touring holiday in the country in the 1930s - in tweeds. She may be wearing plus fours or walking shoes also. Her total luggage consists of a small vanity case. As she enters she flaps the broly she is taking down to dry it and hands it, without looking, to Cringe, who throws it down. She then proceeds to remove her gloves as she speaks. During the next line she passes the gloves to Cringe, again without looking, and he throws them to the floor.

HARRIET Good evening. I do apologise for intruding. I'm afraid your swamp has just devoured my baby Austin.

MARCUS How gruesome.

HARRIET Don't worry - it's a car. My brother makes them, I can easily get another. I wonder whether I might use your phone. (*Thrusting her hand forward*) The name's Ffinch. Harriet Ffinch.

Marcus is so overawed by Dr Ffinch that without thinking he removes his hand from his smoking jacket pocket to shake hands. The marked tremor is immediately apparent and he quickly replaces it.

HARRIET But my dear fellow... you're not well.

MARCUS It's nothing. My old war wound. A sniper caught me in the Dardanelles.

HARRIET How painful. You must let me have a look at it sometime - I'm a doctor.

MARCUS (*Interested*) Indeed. What a coincidence. Though not medical myself, over the years I have developed a keen interest in the workings of the human brain. I've devoted many years to unravelling its' mysteries. I'd love to discuss the subject with you sometime. (*Suddenly a hint more aggression again*) Those fools in the village don't understand. They think I'm mad because of the work I do here. You don't think I'm mad, do you, Dr Ffinch?

HARRIET Not at all. I find the brain quite fascinating.

MARCUS Really? Then you must come and see my collection. I've got hundreds.

HARRIET (*Sweetly*) Some other time, perhaps. In the meantime, perhaps I could use your phone?

MARCUS I'm afraid that's quite out of the question. All the lines are down and the bridges have been swept away. Rescue tonight is quite hopeless. Allow me to offer you the hospitality of Talbot Manor. Cringe will arrange for your luggage to be collected.

CRINGE Lug-gage.

HARRIET (*Indicating the vanity case*) Oh, there's only this...

She hands the case to Cringe who immediately buckles under the weight.

HARRIET Stage weight to deter muggers. One can never be too careful, and it does wonders for the biceps.

MARCUS Cringe will take you to your room.

CRINGE Room.

MARCUS I'm afraid the electricity has gone and we're resorting to candles.

Another loud crack of thunder.

HARRIET Yes, it's quite eerie, isn't it? Like something out of an Agatha Christie. *(to Frau Schmidt)* My passion... detective novels.

Liberty and Thaddeus come downstairs and join the group before Harriet can leave. Initially Cringe stares at Thaddeus but then fixes his gaze on Liberty, as if trying to place her face

LIBERTY *(Furious)* Well, I have travelled the world from the White Cliffs of Dover to the Black Hole of Calcutta but I swear I have nevvah seen anywhere to match this place. Frau Schmidt, my room is *full* of creepy-crawlies the like of which I have nevvah seen before.

SCHMIDT *(having wiped her eye)* I'm sorry, Miss Talbot. I'll arrange to have them catalogued immediately.

Frau Schmidt exits.

MARCUS I see you haven't changed, Liberty. All these years and still you retain all of mother's less favourable genetic qualities. If you'd care to accompany me to father's old laboratory I'd be happy to have them removed.

LIBERTY Time ain't exactly sweetened you neither, Marcus. Land's sakes, Mom was right to escape this hellhole when she could. Why I'd never have returned if it hadn't been for the... *(she pauses, uncomfortably)*

MARCUS Money? I hear Las Vegas can be a little expensive.

LIBERTY ...If it hadn't been for the sudden death of my brother.

Harriet steps forward.

HARRIET My dear, I'm so sorry. Please accept my condolences. *(She thrusts her hand forward)* Harriet Finch.

MARCUS It was only the pronouncement of my brother's death that was sudden, Dr Finch. Mason Talbot disappeared several years ago. His last will and testament is due to be read tonight. *(To Liberty)*

I suppose your unexpected appearance, like a moth to a flame, is pure coincidence...

Thaddeus steps in to protect Liberty.

THADDEUS Now, look here, Talbot. I don't much like your tone.

Cringe immediately steps in between them to protect Marcus, growling. Almost immediately his gaze completely changes and he looks longingly, and with some familiarity, at Liberty.

MARCUS Back, Cringe. I apologise, Mr Kent. Cringe is fiercely loyal, as you can see.

Marcus raises his hand, as if to reach out to Cringe, who flinches as if he has been struck by the same hand many times before.

THADDEUS I don't mind telling you, Liberty. The sooner we get outa here the better. That fella gives me the creeps, and no mistake.

Suddenly Liberty is looking more intently at Cringe. At first apprehensive, her expression changes to one of surprise and horror. There is a long pause before she turns on Marcus.

LIBERTY You *fiend*. What have you done?

MARCUS Isn't that obvious? Saved him from a fate worse than living death.

There is a hushed silence. Suddenly, there is a very loud crack of thunder. The storm is obviously building to a climax. During the next few lines the rumbles become ever louder and more frequent.

HARRIET I do believe that storm is getting closer.

MARCUS My *experiment*! There's not a moment to lose.

Marcus rushes towards the stairs.

HARRIET What a curious fellow.

CRINGE *(to Harriet, starting to get a little impatient)* Room.

Wetherby re-enters, accompanied by Frau Schmidt. Wetherby is clutching his briefcase and a collection of papers tied with legal ribbon. He meets Marcus, who brushes past him.

WETHERBY Mr. Talbot... it's almost time...

MARCUS Not now. Another moment and it may be *too late*...!

Marcus hurries up the stairs.

WETHERBY Ah. You must be Miss Talbot. I see you arrived in one piece.

LIBERTY You must be Mr Wetherby. I got your letter and I'm *most* grateful. If there's anything I can do for you in return... just let me know. My card.

Liberty produces a business card, which she gives to Wetherby, who passes it almost immediately to Frau Schmidt, who passes it to Thaddeus, who passes it to Cringe, who after the briefest of glances, throws it over his shoulder.

WETHERBY *(to Harriet)* And you must be... *(not having the faintest idea)*

HARRIET Dr Harriet Ffinch. Don't mind me, I'm just passing through.

CRINGE Room.

HARRIET You must be the Talbot family solicitor.

WETHERBY Lawrence Wetherby, of Wetherby, Wetherby and Smudge. *(A brief pause, acknowledging Harriet's blank stare)* There was a problem with the biro.

CRINGE Room.

*There is still no sign of Harriet moving. Cringe, fed up, drops the bag and moves towards the stairs. **There is another almighty clap of thunder.** Ruby comes running in, screaming. She moves next to Frau Schmidt.*

RUBY Aaaaaaaaaaaahh!! I'm sorry, M'm. I can't stand it any more, really I can't. It's the thunder, m'm. It's the last straw. What with all them weepin' and wailin' and screechin' and screamin', there's nothing on earth that could keep me here now, m'm - nothing! *(She suddenly sees Thaddeus. It is love at first sight)* Oh, hello.
You're lovely. *(to Frau Schmidt, but not averting her gaze from Thaddeus for a moment)* Tea for five, m'm?

SCHMIDT That would be splendid, Ruby.

WETHERBY No, wait, Ruby. You're just in time to be a witness to Mason Talbot's will.

A church bell tolls three.

WETHERBY Eleven o'clock. It's time.

There is a loud crash of thunder followed by a blinding flash. There are gasps and cries of astonishment from all but Ruby and Thaddeus, whose eyes are still fixed on each other.

LIBERTY Mercy. What in Heaven's name was that?

RUBY *(looking at Thaddeus)* Did the earth move for you, too?

Cringe reappears at the top of the stairs.

CRINGE Accident! Master... Dead.

WETHERBY No!

LIBERTY What does he mean?

THADDEUS I'll check, honey. You stay here.

Thaddeus runs to the stairs and exits past Cringe.

HARRIET Goodness, it's just like a scene from Ellery Queen. In *The Franklin Mysteries* there was a coach party who arrived at a haunted house in the dark of night only to find that their host had been electrocuted.

Thaddeus re-enters.

THADDEUS It's Marcus. In the laboratory. He's been electrocuted.

HARRIET What a shocking coincidence.

LIBERTY Dr Finch, that's not a very tactful remark, given the current situation. It's obviously been a dreadful accident.

SCHMIDT Marcus was always very careful in his laboratory, Miss Talbot. This was no accident. *(To Wetherby, a little too loudly)* What have you done?

WETHERBY Me?

SCHMIDT One day I'll deal with him and take you away from all this, you said.

LIBERTY What did you mean by that?

SCHMIDT And you. Couldn't wait to get your hands on the family fortune.

THADDEUS Wetherby, are you going to let her speak to my fiancée in that way?

SCHMIDT *Fiancée?*

LIBERTY *(to Frau Schmidt)* What about you? That's why you were so surprised to see me. You'd planned the whole thing. Kill Marcus, then take over Talbot Manor for yourself... Frau Schmidt.

Frau Schmidt wipes her eye.

WETHERBY What about Cringe? He isn't as dumb as he looks.

CRINGE Dumb.

WETHERBY *(Second thoughts)* But then again...

RUBY What are we going to do?

HARRIET Well, my brother is an inspector in Scotland Yard, and I know what he would do.

ALL What?

Harriet wipes her eye.

HARRIET Solve this mystery. *(To the audience)* Ladies and gentlemen, with my knowledge of police methods and your help I think we can solve this murder. But first, I think I can smell something coming from the kitchen. Whilst you have something to eat, I shall take these suspects for further questioning. But first, I think we should all go down to Marcus Talbot's laboratory and switch off the current before he becomes just like one of Agatha Christie's detective stories. *(Pause)* Rather well done.

All exit.

