

## Characters

<b>Kira (F)</b>	-	A scary and unpredictable assassin.
<b>Lord Toby (M)</b>	-	An amiable and eccentric aristocrat.
<b>Abbot (M)</b>	-	Lord Toby's starkly efficient yet slightly tetchy butler. Husband to Jessica and in his sixties.
<b>Jessica Abbot (F)</b>	-	A talented and knowledgeable art restorer and wife to Abbot.
<b>Grace * (F)</b>	-	The middle-aged curator of the Bristol Centre art gallery. She's smart and secretive – disguised as Maid at Cringing Manor
<b>Alana (F)</b>	-	A clever and insightful but slightly dippy private enquiry agent. She should have a recognisable regional accent
<b>Maid (Jenny)* (F)</b>	-	A polite maid at Cringing Manor – Grace Quirrel in disguise
<b>Bob (M)</b>	-	Lord Toby's laconic handyman
<b>Cook (M)</b>	-	Lord Toby's Elderly and helpful footman
<b>Footman (M)</b>	-	Lord Toby's cheerful and good-natured cook
<b>Sam (M)</b>	-	Lord Toby's young and laid-back chauffer
<b>Gridlock (F)</b>	-	A highly perceptive and experienced Scotland Yard chief inspector
<b>Juleee (F)</b>	-	A young detective constable. She's cynical yet resourceful
<b>Daily (M)</b>	-	A doctor with a brusque manner
<b>Fox (M)</b>	-	A detective sergeant. He's impulsive but efficient and good-natured
<b>Frank (M)</b>	-	Uncle Sam's son (Can be doubled with Geoff)
<b>Harriet (F)</b>	-	Uncle Sam's daughter (Can be doubled with Eve)
<b>Uncle Sam (M)</b>	-	Lord Toby's good-natured uncle
<b>Geoff (M)</b>	-	A young father-to-be (Can be doubled with Frank)
<b>Eve (F)</b>	-	A young mother-to-be (Can be doubled with Harriet)
<b>Alex (M)</b>	-	A young enthusiastic and professional security guard

\*Grace and Maid should be played by the same actor

Cast of 20 without doubling

Cast of 18 with doubling

The burglars' bodies are also doubling opportunities

## Act 1

### Scene 1 – The lobby at Cringing Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. There are entrances at upstage centre, centre stage right, and centre downstage left - this last one with a working door. On the upstage wall there are four paintings including an oil portrait of an Edwardian lady. A low table and two chairs are at upstage left, a drinks table with two glasses and a decanter of sherry is at downstage left, a sofa at centre stage with a small table in front of it, and a desk and chair at downstage left. Three photos and a telephone are on the desk. We are to imagine that there's a French window at centre stage right. A body of a man lies face down at downstage centre, a torch and large candlestick next to his right hand. A body of a woman lies face up at upstage left. A handgun lies on the sofa and a knife on the floor next to the woman's body. Sitting in a wheelchair, Lord Teasdale enters from upstage centre, followed by Gridlock, Juleee, Fox, Maid, and Abbot, the butler. Juleee carries a fingerprint dusting kit and Fox carrying a notebook and pencil, takes notes)

**Gridlock:** So, this is exactly where it happened, Your Lordship?

**Toby:** Yes, Chief Inspector. Please call me Toby though. I'm not in favour of all that *lordship* nonsense.

**Gridlock:** Alright, Toby. This is DS Fox and DC Chase.

**Toby:** How do you do?

**Juleee:** **(Looks around the room)** Not as well as you, I reckon, but thanks for asking.

**Gridlock:** And you say that you heard a noise and came in here. He picked up that candlestick and charged at you.

**Toby:** That's right, and she pointed a knife at me. I didn't have time to think; I just shot them both.

**Gridlock:** Can you dust for prints, Juleee.

**Juleee:** Right, Chief.

**(Juleee starts dusting at the low table. Fox bags the gun and knife)**

**Gridlock:** Do you recognise either of the deceased?

**(Fox moves to centre stage right)**

**Toby:** Oh, yes. They're the two burglars I shot earlier.

**Gridlock:** No. I mean, had you seen either of these *before* you shot them?

**Toby:** Only very briefly. Just for a few seconds, really, you know....

**Gridlock:** **(Wearily)**...before you shot them.

**Toby:** Yes.

**Juleee:** I'd give up on this line of questioning, if I were you, Chief.

**Gridlock:** You say that you heard noises early this morning.

**Toby:** Yes, about two o'clock. I sleep downstairs, you see on a sofa bed – just through there. **(Indicates the downstage left entrance)**

**Gridlock:** And your butler came in a few minutes after you'd shot them?

**Toby:** Yes. Abbot awoke when he heard the shots. His room is right above here.

**Gridlock** **(To Maid)** Do you clean in here every day?

**Maid** Yes; every day except for Sundays.

**Gridlock:** Do you clean the pictures as well?

**Maid:** No. I'm not allowed to.

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**Abbot** His Lordship has them sent away for professional cleaning.

**Maid** Can I go now, Mister Abbot?

**(Abbot looks at Gridlock who nods. Fox sniggers)**

**Abbot:** Yes. And remember, Jenny, you call me Abbot. You don't need to call me *mister*.

**Maid:** Yes. Sorry, Mr Abbot.

**(Abbot sighs and Maid exits at centre stage right)**

**Fox:** Blimey, Juleee. You're using an awful lot of powder. I can hardly breathe in here.

**Juleee:** Nobody's asking you to.

**Fox:** Is this where they broke in?

**Toby:** Yes. They seem to have smashed the glass and reached in to unlock the doors.

**Gridlock:** Are these French windows always kept locked?

**Toby:** Yes. Always.

**Fox** Do you think this is the work of Whispering Will, Chief?

**Toby:** Goodness! Do you mean I might have bagged Scotland Yard's most wanted art thief?

**Juleee:** Nice bit of exposition, Your Lordship.

**Toby:** Oh, er. Thank you.

**Fox:** That's more like back-story than exposition though, I'd say.

**Juleee:** Tomato, tomato.

**Fox:** Tomato, *to-may-toe*, you mean.

**Juleee:** What?

**Fox:** That's how you are meant to say it.

**Juleee:** You can be very picky you know.

**Fox:** You mean *scrupulous*. I can be very *scrupulous*.

**(Juleee blows dusting powder from her brush into Fox's face. He coughs and splutters. Fox moves to the man's body and, after searching his pockets, finds a five of hearts playing card. He holds it aloft)**

**Gridlock:** We've long suspected that Whispering Will's thefts were the work of two people.

**Fox:** Look, Chief. He was carrying Whispering Will's calling card. The five of hearts.

**Juleee:** He didn't get time to leave it pinned to the wall like he usually does. Wait a bit. How do we know she's not Whispering Will?

**Gridlock:** Come to think of it, they might *both* be Whispering Will.

**(Fox hands the card to Gridlock and moves to search the woman's body)**

**Fox:** Why do think Whispering Will leaves the five of hearts at every crime scene?

**Gridlock:** My theory is that it's an anagram of *he thieves of art*.

**Toby:** Oh, I say; that's very clever.

**Fox:** **(With sudden inspiration)** Or, how about this? If you put an extra *t* at the start it could be *the thieves of art*. That'd back up the theory that there's two of them.

**Gridlock:** **(Resentfully)** I suppose so.

**Fox:** And, unlike yours, it's grammatically correct.

**Gridlock:** **(Gruffly)** Yes. Thank you Fox. Where do you keep your gun?

**Toby:** In a drawer; in my bedside table.

**Gridlock:** Do you have a licence for it?

**Toby:** Oh, I didn't know I needed a licence for a bedside table.

**Gridlock:** Er, no; I meant...

**Toby:** **(Cutting her off)** You learn something new every day.

**Fox:** Now, Mr Abbot. You were the first person here after you heard the shot. Is that right?

**Abbot:** That is correct. And, if you don't mind, it isn't necessary to call me *mister*. It's *just* Abbot.

**Gridlock:** And nothing's been moved or removed since then?

**Abbot:** Not as far as I can see.

**Gridlock:** Nobody entered here after you came in?

**Abbot:** No. You and the other detectives were the next to come in here.

**(SFX. doorbell)**

**Abbot:** If you'll excuse me.

**(Abbot exits at upstage centre. Gridlock moves to the picture of a woman on the upstage wall. She runs her finger along the top of the frame and then examines her finger)**

**Gridlock:** Is this picture very valuable?

**Toby:** Certainly. It's a portrait of my mother, painted by Georges Cliché.  
**(Gridlock does the same dust check with the other pictures)**

**Fox:** Wow. It must be worth a bomb.

**Juleee:** Suddenly, you're an art expert.

**Fox:** You'd be surprised how much I know.

**Juleee:** Yes; I *definitely* would.

**Fox:** I keep my eyes and ears open. I've picked up some interesting stuff from crime scenes.

**Juleee:** That's evidence. You're not meant to take it home with you.

**Gridlock:** Do you think they were after this portrait?

**Toby:** I would imagine so. There's very little of Cliché's work outside of galleries these days. And, of course, he's dead so that doubled the value of all his stuff.  
**(Abbot enters at upstage centre accompanied by Dr Daily carrying a doctor's bag)**

**Abbot:** Dr Daily is here, Your Lordship.

**Gridlock:** Morning Dr Daily.

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**Juleee:** **(Brightly)** Oh, hello Bill.

**Daily:** Hello, Juleee. Good morning Gridlock, Fox. I'll get started then.  
**(Daily moves to the man's body and examines it)**

**Gridlock:** Of course. How many staff have you here, Toby?

**Toby:** There's Abbot, the two maids: Jenny and Zoe, Bob the handyman, His lordship's driver - Sam, Footman, and Cook. That's seven.

**Juleee:** How very cosy.

**Daily:** Two bullet wounds, one in the abdomen and the other in the chest. That seems to be the cause of death.

**Toby:** I shot him twice. The first one was in the stomach. I'd adjusted my aim for height when I took the second shot. Then I shot her once.  
**(Daily moves to the woman's body)**

**Gridlock:** Juleee. Could you take their fingerprints and a hair sample for DNA.  
**(Juleee joins Daily at the woman's body, takes out her mobile phone and photographs the corpse's fingers then cuts and bags a strand of hair from each. She then does the same with the man's body. Gridlock surveys the room)**

**Daily:** Single bullet wound in the chest with this one.

**Gridlock:** What do you think the times of death are?

**Daily:** Oh, yes. Well, let me see; when did you shoot them, Your Lordship?

**Toby:** Two o'clock.

**Daily:** And what is the time now?

**Fox:** It's three-thirty.

**Daily:** Well, I would say they've been dead for no longer than an hour and a half.

**Gridlock:** Thank you, Doctor Daily. Abbot. Could you bring the rest of the staff in here. We won't need Jenny though.

**Abbot:** Very good, Chief Inspector Gridlock.  
**(Abbot exits at centre stage right )**

**Daily:** I'll take my leave now. I'll arrange for the bodies to be taken for post-mortem.

**Juleee:** I'll see you in the pub later then, Bill.

**Daily:** Definitely.

**Fox:** Oh, are we going for a pint after this?

**Juleee:** *We are (Indicating herself and Daily) but you're not, Foxie.*  
**(Daily exits at upstage centre. Abbot enters with Alana, Cook, Bob, Sam and Footman at centre stage right)**

**Toby:** This is Zoe our other maid, Sam the chauffeur, Bob, Footman and Cook.  
**(Cook, Footman, Sam, Bob, and Alana – disguised as Zoe – form a line)**

**Gridlock:** Take notes please, Fox.  
**(Fox takes notes in a small notebook throughout the interviews)**

**Gridlock:** So, Zoe. Where were you at 2 o'clock this morning?

**Alana:** I was asleep in my bedroom in the east wing. I slept right through until 6 o'clock this morning.

**Gridlock:** Did you remain in your room until this morning?

**Alana:** Oh, yes. I've only been working here a week, so I'm permanently knackered.

**Gridlock:** Very good. Now, Cook, where were you at that time?

**Cook:** Oi wuz asleep in moi cottage.

**Gridlock:** And is your cottage in the grounds?

**Cook:** Oh, yus. It's roight next to the vegetable gardens yonder **(Points towards stage left).**

**Gridlock:** Did you see or hear anything unusual around two o'clock this morning?

**Cook:** As a matter of fact, oi did. Oi heard someone crunchin' about on the gravel drive loike, about one-ish, I reckon. It woke me up – gave me a roite old start it did.

**Fox:** **(Spoken to himself as he writes)** Start it did.

**Cook:** Oi looked out of moi kitchen window and oi saw a shadowy figure 'eadin towards that window there **(Points towards centre stage right).**

**Juleee:** Did you see who it was?

**Cook:** I didn't rightly 'ave what you'd call a good sight of him, but oi reckon it was a tall bloke.

**Gridlock:** Roughly how tall, would you say?

**Cook:** **(Points to the man's corpse)** About that tall, I'd say.

**Juleee:** Did you see him enter here?

**Cook:** That oi did. Now that oi think of it, he wuz dressed all in black.

**Juleee:** Yes. He's all in black. Right garb for a burglary.

**(Juleee crosses to other body)**

**Juleee:** Now that's weird. She's *definitely* not dressed for a break-in. She's wearing a white blouse and a long skirt.

**Gridlock:** That could be important, Juleee. Did you see him break the window?

**Cook:** No. It looked to me loike he just opened the French windows and went in.

**Juleee:** Sounds like someone could've let him in.

**Fox:** An inside job? They probably broke the window later, to make it look like a break-in.

**Gridlock:** That's certainly a possibility. Someone in this house might well be his accomplice. Now, what did you do after you saw him enter the house?

**Cook:** Well, oi thought, seeing as I wuz up an all, I'd go and check on my bees. You know, settle them down. Then oi went back to bed.

**Fox:** Did you see a light on in here?

**Cook:** Oh, yes.

**Juleee:** Makes you wonder why he needed that torch then, doesn't it?

**Gridlock:** Did you see anyone else before you went back to sleep?

**Cook:** No. I didn't see a soul until this mornin' when cook and me had breakfast in the kitchen.

**Footman:** Aye. That's right. We had kippers.

**Fox:** Woah! Hold on a bit. Cook and you had breakfast? I thought *you* were the cook.

**Cook:** Oh, no **(Chuckles)**. Oim Fred Cook, the Footman. This here is John Footman, the cook.

**Juleee:** That seems unnecessarily confusing.

**Gridlock:** So, Mister Footman. Did you see or hear anything around that time?

**Footman:** Funny you should ask that. I sleep in the east wing, and I heard a car coming up the drive, around one o'clock I think.

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**Fox:** The plot thickens.

**Juleee:** Did you see the car?

**Footman:** I didn't see it, but it sounded like an old Jaguar XJ2.

**Fox:** What makes you think that?

**Footman:** I used to work in a garage, years ago. They have a very distinctive engine sound – sort of like a gargling noise.

**(Footman makes a gargling noise in his throat)**

**Cook:** No, no. That sounds more like a Bentley Roadster Mark IV. The Jag XJ2 is more like a sort of deep humming...

**(Cook makes a humming noise in his throat)**

**Footman:** Nah. You're thinking of the old Jaguar Sovereign's sound. The Roadster made more of a popping sound...

**(Footman starts to make a popping sound. Fox shakes his head and puts his notepad and pencil away)**

**Gridlock:** **(Cutting him off)** Enough! Thank you. Did you see anyone else about at that time?

**Footman:** When I looked out of my window, I happen to see Buttler having a smoke by the orchard.

**Juleee:** Wait a minute. **(Spoken to Toby)** Didn't you say your butler, Abbot, was asleep at that time?

**Sam:** Oh, no. Mr Footman is talking about me. I'm Sam Buttler, His Lordship's driver. He saw me having a ciggy. There's no smoking indoors at Cringing Manor.

**Gridlock:** You're the chauffeur?

**Sam:** That I am. Peter here is the butler, of course.

**Fox:** **(Sniggers)** Peter. He's called Peter. It *had* to be Peter.

**Abbot:** **(Annoyed)** It's *Abbot* to you, Buttler. You call me Abbot.

**Sam:** Oh, yes. Sorry Mr Abbot.

**Fox:** **(Spoken to himself)** Peter Abbot. That's priceless.

**Abbot:** **(Seething)** Just Abbot! No *mister*. How many times do I have to tell you?

**Fox:** Did you see a car at that time, Sam?

**Sam:** I did hear a car, but I didn't see one.

**Gridlock:** Did you hear the gun shots?

**Sam:** No. I went to bed after my smoke. Fell fast asleep. Next thing I know, Driver is knocking on my door telling me the police were here.

**Fox:** Driver? I thought *you* were the driver.

**Sam:** No. **(Points to Bob)** That's Bob Driver, the handyman.

**Juleee:** Naturally.



**Fox:** Seriously? Let's get this straight Toby; your footman is called Cook, your cook is called Footman, your handyman's called Driver, and your driver's called Buttlar.

**Toby:** Yes.

**Juleee:** Unbelievable.

**Fox:** You haven't made things easy for yourself, have you?

**Toby:** I don't deal with the staff; that's Abbot's job.

**Juleee:** Not one for the common touch then?

**Gridlock:** Okay. So, Bob, did you see or hear anything going on during that time?

**Bob:** No. Slept right through until I was woken up by all the commotion.

**Gridlock:** Do any of you recognise either of these dead people?

**Cook:** Nope.

**Footman:** No.

**Alana:** Definitely not.

**Sam:** No.

**Bob:** Nah.

**Gridlock:** How about you, Abbot?

**(Abbot and Toby exchange concerned glances)**

**Abbot:** They don't seem familiar. No.

**Gridlock:** Just one more thing. Can you all show me your hands?

**(Abbot and the staff display their hands to Gridlock. She looks at them briefly)**

**Gridlock:** Thanks. Nobody is to leave the house until further notice. One last thing, Abbot. Did you turn the light on in this room when you came in?

**Abbot:** No, Chief Inspector. Can I dismiss the staff now, Your Lordship?

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**Toby:** If that's alright with you, Chief Inspector.

**(Gridlock nods and Abbot, Alana, Bob, Sam, Cook, and Footman exit at centre stage right)**

**Toby:** Do you need me for anything else?

**Gridlock:** Not for the moment, Toby.

**Toby:** Well, if you need me, I'll be in my room **(Points towards downstage left)**.

**(Toby exits at downstage left)**

**Fox:** Why did you look at their hands, Chief?

**Gridlock:** It's just a hunch really. Juleee. I'd like you to send the fingerprints to the lab now.

**(Juleee presses a button on her mobile phone)**

**Juleee:** Right away, boss. And...no signal. I'll get the fingerprints and hair samples off to the lab later today.

**Gridlock:** Thank you Juleee. Fox. I want you to check the drive for tyre marks.

**Fox:** Okay, Chief.

**(Fox exits at upstage centre. Juleee removes a shoe from the man's body and brings it to Gridlock. Gridlock examines the sole)**

**Juleee:** This place is about one hundred miles from the nearest town. We're bound to be able to track that car.

**Gridlock:** Yes, it is *extremely* remote. Just this place and a small village...

**Juleee:** ...in the centre of Dartmoor.

**Juleee:** **(Tapping on her mobile phone)** With a very poor signal.

**Gridlock:** I think it's safe to say that we're in the middle of nowhere here.

**Juleee:** Pretty well cut off, I reckon. Wait a second. How did Dr Daily get here so quickly? He's based in Bristol.

**Gridlock:** It's probably best not to overthink things like that.

**Juleee:** **(Taps on her mobile again)** Aha. Got a signal at last.

**(Gridlock examines the sole of the shoe closely)**

**Juleee:** What is it, Chief?

**Gridlock:** There's absolutely no wear on the sole of this shoe. It looks brand new.

**Juleee:** That's weird, isn't it?

**Gridlock:** Indeed.

**Juleee:** What do you think's happened here?

**Gridlock:** Well, I'm pretty sure that this wasn't a burglary. As you pointed out, she's not exactly dressed for such an event, and, besides, who turned on the light in here?

**Juleee:** What do you mean?

**Gridlock:** Well, Abbot didn't turn it on, and Toby's confined to a wheelchair, so he couldn't reach that light switch.

**Juleee:** Oh, I see. If these two were burglars, they wouldn't turn on the light either; they'd use that torch instead.

**Gridlock:** Exactly. If you think about it, until we got in here, nobody would've had the chance to switch it on.

**Juleee:** There's something else, boss.

**Gridlock:** What.

**Juleee:** This candlestick only has prints on the base. If you were going to use it as a weapon, you'd think there'd be prints on the top half. It's looking more and more like an inside job, isn't it?

**Gridlock:** Well spotted. At least one member of the household is behind this.

**Fox:** And Toby's story is looking very shaky.  
(**Fox enters at upstage centre**)

**Juleee:** That was jolly quick, Foxie.

**Fox:** Er, yes. I suppose so. Some tracks, Chief, but too faint to identify.

**Gridlock:** Never mind. Abbot is definitely holding something back.

**Fox:** (**Sniggers**) Peter Abbot. Should we nick him for pinching Mr McGregor's lettuces?

**Juleee:** Oh, for goodness' sake.

**Fox:** I bet he'd be *hopping* mad if we did.

**Juleee:** You're infantile.

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(**Alana enters at upstage centre and remains in doorway, unseen by the other three**)

**Alana:** Psssst.

**Fox:** (**Brightly**) Oh, it's you, Zoe. Hi.  
(**Alana joins them. She gives her business card to Gridlock**)

**Alana:** Actually, I'm undercover here.

**Gridlock:** (**Reading card**) Alana Sultana. Private Enquiry Agent.

**Juleee:** Fake copper.

**Alana:** (**Looks around, warily**) There's something very fishy going on here at Cringing Manor.

**Juleee:** What are you doing here?

**Alana:** I was hired by a doctor's receptionist, Mrs Sommer Day about three weeks ago. She told me that she was engaged to Lord Toby. He'd met her months ago at Doctor Ping's surgery in the local village.

**Fox:** He's paralysed, isn't he?

**Alana:** Yes. Dr Ping confirmed that Toby's been unable to walk since a riding accident when he was twenty-three. When Toby's horse came back from a ride without him, his groom, Gerry, went looking for him and found him lying in the woods.

**Fox:** Is Gerry still working here?

**Alana:** No, he left His Lordship's service years ago.

**Gridlock:** That's a pity. Gerry would *definitely* be able to tell us if this chap is the real Toby. Have any of you looked him up on social media? There must be a photo somewhere of Lord Toby.

**Alana:** Already tried that. Not a sausage. If he had a profile that was any lower, he'd be two dimensional.

**Juleee:** What are Toby's appointments for?

**Alana:** They're for physiotherapy and to review his prescription. He suddenly stopped turning up for his appointments about a month ago and completely cut contact with Sommer.

**Gridlock:** And Sommer wants you to find out why he's abandoned her?

**Alana:** Exactly. They'd kept the engagement secret from the rest of the family because they wouldn't approve of his marrying a lowly receptionist.

**Fox:** What have you found out then?

**Alana:** Well, I told Sommer that I was going undercover here but she must have decided to confront Toby herself anyway.

**Gridlock:** I see.

**Alana:** And, there's something weird about the other staff here.

**Fox:** What's that?

**Alana:** They've all been appointed over the last month. Toby seems to have sacked all the old staff in one go.

**Juleee:** Suspicious.

**Gridlock:** So, essentially, there's nobody here, in Cringing Manor that could identify this man as Lord Toby.

**Alana:** Yes; I suppose so. He got the lot from an agency.

**Fox:** You've certainly been very thorough, Alana. Very impressive stuff.

**Alana:** Thank you, DS Fox.

**Fox:** I'm Freddie, Please call me Freddie.

**Alana:** Alright, Freddie.

**Fox:** Very clever of you to go undercover. Excellent disguise. It suits you.

**Alana:** Thanks.

**Juleee:** I think he's flirting with you.

**Fox:** What? Juleee! I am doing no such thing.

**Alana:** **(Flirtatiously)** Oh, that is a shame.

**Fox:** **(Embarrassed)** Well...I mean I *am*. That's to say...

**Gridlock:** **(Cutting him off)** Have you three finished?

**Fox:** Yes boss. Sorry. **(Spoken to Juleee)** Why do always have to embarrass me?

**Juleee:** It's one of the perks of my job.

**Gridlock:** Well, I think it's time I had a few words with Sommer Day.

**(Alana walks to woman's body)**

**Alana:** I'm afraid it's too late for that Chief Inspector. She's this one.

**Juleee:** Poor Sommer.

**Fox:** Well, that proves this guy isn't the real Lord Teasdale, doesn't it?

**Gridlock:** As a matter of fact, it doesn't. We only know that Sommer says she was engaged to a bloke who *claimed* to be Toby.

**Fox:** Do you think this Toby could be an imposter?

**Juleee:** **(Crossing to the desk and picking up a photo)** The man in these family photos is definitely the Toby in there **(Points towards downstage left entrance)**.

**Fox:** Yes, but an imposter would probably plant fake photos here.

**Gridlock:** Then again, Sommer could have been lying about being engaged to Toby.

**Alana:** She seemed convinced enough to pay me to check up on him though.

**Juleee:** How much did she pay you?

**Alana:** That's a private matter really.

**Juleee:** If we're going to trust you, you're going to have to be straight with us.

**Alana:** Well, she paid me five hundred up front and my daily fee is one hundred a day plus expenses.

**Juleee:** Phew! I'm definitely in the wrong business.

**Gridlock:** The lady in this photograph must be his sister, Lady Alice.

**Juleee:** She's ten years older than Toby.

**Fox:** Well, she's bound to know if this is actually her real brother, isn't she?

**Gridlock:** Yes. Also, Dr Ping could tell us if this is the same man she's treating.

**Fox:** Chief. I think it might be time for you and me to visit the Lady Alice.

**Gridlock:** Yes. Good idea.

**Fox:** Juleee. Could you pay a visit to Dr Ping's surgery and take one of these photos of Toby; see if she can confirm it's the same man.

**Juleee:** Look. I've already got stuff to do. Can't you do it?

**Fox:** Who's the detective sergeant here?

**Juleee:** **(Sighs)** It's hard to tell most of the time.

**(Juleee takes the photo and exits in a huff at upstage centre as Toby enters from downstage left. Alana exits at centre stage right)**

**Alana:** **(Spoken as she exits)** Bye for now, Freddie.

**Fox:** See you later, Alana.

**Gridlock:** Oh, Toby. I'm glad you've joined us. Now, tell me, have you been treated by a Dr Ping?

**Toby:** Of course. She's the specialist I see in the village.

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**Gridlock:** And are you engaged to his secretary, Sommer Day?

**Toby:** Of course not. That's absurd. I hardly know the lady.

**Gridlock:** Well, you must have met her many times on your visits to the surgery.

**Toby:** Of course I've seen her, and even passed the time of day with her.

**Fox:** Then, isn't it a bit odd that you didn't recognise her.

**Toby:** What do you mean?

**Fox:** When you shot her dead, earlier this morning.

**Toby:** **(Rattled)** Oh, er, I didn't...you know...recognise her. It was dark after all.

**Fox:** Pretty good shooting then, considering all that darkness.

**Gridlock:** Does your sister live on the grounds?

**Toby:** Oh, yes. She has the cottage by the main entrance. She's lived there since my dear mother passed away

**Gridlock:** Well, I'd like to speak with her as soon as possible.

**Toby:** **(Nervously)** Oh, er...of course. I'll give her a call and let her know you're coming over.

**(Toby takes out his mobile phone and dials. After a 5 seconds pause, he speaks)**

**Toby:** Hello. Hello, Alice dear. Look, there's been an incident here and three police officers will be coming over there to ask you some questions.

**(Slight pause)**

**Toby:** Oh, really. Yes. That makes sense. I'll see you soon then.

**Fox:** Is everything alright, Toby?

**Toby:** Er, yes. My sister will be coming straight over here. Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some estate business to take care of.

**Gridlock:** Of course.

**(Toby exits at downstage left)**

**Fox:** He doesn't seem to shaken by all this, does he?

**Gridlock:** He might well be in shock. **(Confidentially)** Now, listen, Fox; I want you to stand over there **(Indicates downstage left)** and have a peek through the keyhole into Toby's room.

**(Fox moves to downstage left, kneels down and peers through the keyhole)**

**Gridlock:** Can you see him?

**Fox:** Yes, Chief.

**Gridlock:** Now, I want you to take out your mobile phone and ring me on mine.

**(Fox does so. SFX. we hear a brief section from the chorus of Hit the Road Jack by Ray Charles at a loud volume setting. Gridlock and Fox each tap a foot in time with the rhythm)**

**Gridlock:** Watch him closely. Look at his feet.

**Fox:** Yes. What exactly am I looking for?

**Gridlock:** Is he tapping his toes to the rhythm?

**Fox:** No.

**(Both Fox and Gridlock pocket their mobile phones)**

**Gridlock:** That settles it. It's a scientifically proven fact that *nobody* can resist tapping their toes to that tune.

**Fox:** Really?

**Gridlock:** Absolutely. If you're not tapping along with that song, you're either incapable of moving your legs or you're a *sociopath*.

**(Gridlock and Fox briefly scan the audience)**

**Fox:** So, he could be the real Lord Teasdale after all?

**Gridlock:** Yes. Toby or not Toby?

**Fox:** That is the question.

**(Lights down, Tabs close)**

## Scene 2 – The consultation room at Dr Ping’s surgery

(Tabs open. Lights up. Screens/flats section off an area of the stage that suggests Dr Ping’s room. Within its confines are a desk, two chairs, and a two-door office cabinet [large enough to fit Dr Ping’s body]. On Juleee’s chair is a whoopee cushion. There is a working angle poise (or similar) lamp on the desk. Kira sits at the desk, reading some papers. There is a land-line telephone on the desk and some papers. Kira wears a blonde wig and a lab coat over her Lady Teasdale dress. We hear Juleee knocking twice at the centre stage right entrance)

**Kira:** Yes. Come in.

(Juleee enters at centre stage right)

**Juleee:** Oh, hello. Dr Ping?

**Kira:** Yes?

**Juleee:** I don’t like to disturb you...

**Kira:** ...Okay. (Sharply) Go away then.

**Juleee:** (Taken aback) Oh, er. Sorry.

**Kira:** Nah. I’m just kidding you. Come in. Have a seat.

(Juleee lowers herself to sit on the chair opposite Kira)

**Kira:** (Angrily) No! Not there!

(Juleee stands abruptly, somewhat surprised and looks for another chair)

**Kira:** (Laughing) Again, sorry. Only joking. I can’t help myself really. Do sit.

(Juleee sits. SFX. The sound of a whoopee cushion. Juleee stands abruptly, alarmed then, annoyed, removes the whoopee cushion and drops it on the desk. Kira sniggers and Juleee sits)

**Juleee:** Oh, yes; that’s hysterical. I’m DC Chase. I know the surgery is closed, but I need to ask you a few questions?

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(Kira switches on the desk lamp and turns the light towards her own face, interrogation style and then puts her hands behind her back as if bound by handcuffs)

**Kira:** (Spoken in a tough-guy style) C’mon then, copper; do your best. You’ll never make me spill the beans. I aint talkin’.

**Juleee:** What?

**Kira:** Go on; you can grill me like a sardine; I’ll never break.

**Juleee:** (Wearily) Is there much more of this?



**Kira:** No. Absolutely not. Sorry. Guide's honour. Fire away.

**Juleee:** **(Hands photo to Kira)** Do you recognise this man?

**Kira:** Yes, of course. That's one of my patients – Lord Teasdale. Toby.

**Juleee:** Are you absolutely sure of that?

**Kira:** Oh, yes. He's been seeing me for some years now. Tragic accident when he was in his twenties.

**Juleee:** So, he's paralysed from the waist down.

**Kira:** Absolutely. Many different kinds of treatment have been tried, but to no avail, I'm afraid.

**Juleee:** Yes. Tragic.

**Kira:** Still, I suppose he's got to look at the positive side.

**Juleee:** What? What positive side?

**Kira:** It'll save him a fortune in shoes. I mean, have you seen the price of a decent pair of trainers these days?

**(Kira hands the photo back to Juleee)**

**Juleee:** Okay. I see. Is that a new secretary that you have out there **(Points towards centre stage right)**?

**Kira:** Yes. My usual secretary, Miss Day, didn't turn up this morning.

**Juleee:** Do you happen to know why?

**Kira:** Search me.

**(Kira stands and extends her arms to the sides of her torso)**

**Kira:** **(Spoken in hoodlum voice)** Go on then - *search me*. Get on with it copper. I ain't got nothin' to hide. I ain't carrying no piece.

**Juleee:** Oh, for goodness' sake. This is a serious matter, Dr Ping. Can you think of any reason that Miss Day might have taken the time off?

**Kira:** **(Giggling and sitting down)** Perhaps she was having an off *day*. Ha! There are only so many *days* in the week after all.

**Juleee:** Did you know that Miss Day was having a relationship with Lord Teasdale?

**Kira:** No. That's news to me.

**Juleee:** We believe that she'd had been engaged to Toby for some months and that he might have broken it off.

**Kira:** Had they named the *day*?

**Juleee:** I've no idea. Oh, that's another joke, isn't it?

**Kira:** Yes. Maybe he decided to call it a *day*, or perhaps he'd seen better *days*. Get it?

**Juleee:** Unfortunately, yes. Alright, Dr Ping. That's all I need for now, and, for that matter, it's all I can take from you.

**(Juleee stands and heads towards the exit at centre stage right. Kira follows her to the door, talking as she does)**

**Kira:** Perhaps she was having a bad hair *day* or celebrating the *day of the dead*.

**(Juleee stops in her tracks and turns to Kira)**

**Juleee:** What did you just say?

**Kira:** **(Nervously)** Nothing! Just throwing out ideas, you know. Having a giggle. I mean, you've got to laugh haven't you?

**Juleee:** Have I? Why?

**Kira:** Otherwise you'd go mad, wouldn't you?

**Juleee:** Yes. I can see that. Goodbye for now, Doctor Ping.

**(Juleee holds eye-contact with Kira for 2 seconds, before turning and exiting at centre stage right)**

**Kira:** **(Spoken to herself)** Phew! That was close. Nearly blew it then.

**(Kira walks to the office cabinet and opens the doors to reveal the body of Dr Ping who has a stethoscope wrapped around her throat)**

**Kira:** Ah, Dr Ping. How are you *coping*? I do hope you're comfortable in there. Not too cramped? Oh, I see; you're *sleeping*. Ping, ping, ping.

**(Kira blows the body a kiss)**

**Kira:** Sweet dreams.

**(Kira returns to the desk, lifts the receiver of the telephone to her ear, dials and pauses for 3 seconds)**

**Kira:** Hello darling. The job's done. Dr Ping is no longer a problem.

**(Pauses for 3 seconds)**

**Kira:** Yeah. Plod's been over here, and she's swallowed the whole story. I'll see you back at the manor. I think we're in the clear.

**(Pause for 3 seconds)**

**Kira:** What's her dress size?

**(Pause for 2 seconds)**

**Kira:** Sure. That'll fit me alright. I hope this works.

**(Pause for 3 seconds)**

**Kira:** Okay then. I'll come straight over.

**(Lights down. Tabs close)**

### Scene 3 – Toby’s room at Cringing Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. There’s a desk with a drawer and landline telephone at downstage right, a fireplace with mantelpiece at upstage right, and a low coffee table with a jug of water and two glasses at centre stage with two easy chairs, one at either side of it. Two photographs in frames are on the mantelpiece and, between them, a shrunken tribal head, a blowpipe and a clock. A small sofa with two cushions is at upstage left. Two paintings – a landscape and a man’s portrait – are on the upstage wall. There’s an entrance at upstage centre, French windows at downstage left, and an entrance at centre stage right – this last one with a working door that opens inwards. Toby, in his wheelchair, is at downstage right, on a mobile)

**Toby:** Excellent work, Kira. I’ll send Bob over to dispose of Ping’s body. You get yourself over here quickly. Call in at the dower cottage on your way, pick up a dress and get into role.

(Pause for 3 seconds)

**Toby:** Don’t worry. It’ll be a cinch. I left a photo of you in the lobby where the plods have been nosing around. They’re bound to have clocked it already.

(Pause for 2 seconds)

**Toby:** Good. I’ve left a window open here for you, darling. Kisses. See you soon.

(After a short pause, Kira, wearing a dark wig and a dress, climb in through the window)

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**Kira:** Eh, voila! It’s me, your big sister.

**Toby:** Goodness! That was quick.

**Kira:** I can’t hang around, brother dear. I gather that the other plods are in the next room. I saw their car outside.

**Toby:** Yeah. They’re snooping around everywhere.

**Kira:** Don’t let them search the lake, will you.

**Toby:** Why? **(Suddenly realising)** Oh, that’s where you put her?

**Kira:** Yes, indeed. Dear sister Alice is sleeping with the fishes. **(Sighs with satisfaction)** I’ve always wanted to say that.

**Toby:** She won’t give us any more trouble then. What about Quinn, her butler?

**Kira:** Oh, he’s no problem. He’s as blind as a bat and mostly deaf. He hasn’t noticed the difference.

**(SFX. There’s a knock on the door)**

**Toby:** Quick; hide behind the door there.

**(Kira positions herself so that the open door will hide her from view. We hear Gridlock’s voice from offstage)**

**Gridlock:** Excuse me, Toby. Could I speak to you for a moment?

**Toby:** Of course, Chief Inspector. Do come in.

**(Gridlock and Fox enter at centre stage right. They leave the door fully open to hide Kira who, as they enter the room, slips out into the lobby unseen by Fox who then closes the door)**

**Toby:** What can I do for you, Chief Inspector?

**Gridlock:** I just wanted to ask you about all the oil paintings that I've seen around the manor. I hate to ask, but do you have proof of ownership for them?

**Fox:** Provenance.

**Gridlock:** What?

**Fox:** That's the correct term for proof of owning art works.

**Gridlock:** Er, thank you, Fox.

**Toby:** **(Opening the desk drawer)** Of course. It's all here if you'd like to see it. Most were purchased by my father and mother, of course.

**Gridlock:** **(Taking and examining the documents)** Thank you. I'm sure everything is in order. It's just routine.

**(SFX. There's a knock on the door and we hear Abbot's voice)**

**Abbot:** Lady Alice is here, Your Lordship.

**Toby:** Excellent. Do come in.

**(Kira and Abbot enter at centre stage right)**

**Toby:** Sherry please, Abbot.

**(Abbot bows and exits at centre stage right)**

**Kira:** **(Approaching and kissing Toby on the forehead)** Tobias, my dearest brother.

**Toby:** Alice. May I introduce Chief Inspector Gridlock and Detective Sergeant Fox.

**Kira:** **(Nods a greeting)** Charmed. I'd hazard a guess and say that you two gentlemen are here because of the two corpses that I had to step over in the lobby.

**Fox:** Yes, Lady Alice. I assume that Abbot has filled you in on the tragic events of this morning.

**Kira:** Oh, yes. It was only a matter of time, I suppose.

**Gridlock:** What do you mean?

**Kira:** Well, with so many valuable things here, and with my brother's carelessness over security, someone was bound to try their hand, weren't they?

**Toby:** Of course, the Cliché is the only really valuable picture here.

**Fox:** If you don't mind me saying, Lady Alice, you're much younger than I expected.

**Kira:** **(Flirtatiously)** And, if you don't mind *me* saying, you're a great deal more charming than I expected for a detective sergeant.

**(Kira pats the sofa seat next to her, indicating that Fox should sit. Nervously, he does so)**

**Fox:** Oh, er, thank you, Lady Alice.

**Kira:** And, of course, rather handsomer than I anticipated.

**(Abbot enters at centre stage right with a tray of four full sherry glasses. He hands one to each of them and they nod thank-yous. Fox spills some of his sherry on a sofa cushion)**

**Fox:** Oops. Sorry about that.

**Kira:** Oh, don't worry. It'll wash out.

**Gridlock:** Now, Lady Alice, I have some routine questions to ask you and then I'll leave you both in peace.

**Kira:** Of course.

**Gridlock:** Did you recognise either of the two dead people in the lobby?

**Kira:** No.

**Gridlock:** Alright. How long has it been since your father, the previous Lord Teasdale, died?

**Kira:** Ah, you're not catching me out like that, you naughty chief inspector. You know very well that our father was only declared dead six years after he went missing.

**Toby:** Yes. Papa disappeared in the Amazonian jungle on an expedition twenty-two years ago.

**Kira:** I was thirty-one at the time and Tobias was twenty-one. That was two years before his riding accident.

**(Gridlock's mobile phone rings)**

**Gridlock:** Oh, sorry. I'll have to take this.

**(Gridlock takes her mobile out and answers it, leaving short pauses for Julee's replies)**

**Gridlock:** Hello Julee. I see. Dr Ping has confirmed that. You're coming straight over here. Very well; I'll see you in a few minutes.

**(Toby and Kira exchange panicked glances)**

**Kira:** **(Hurriedly)** Well, if that's all you require, I'll take my leave. My champagne isn't going to drink itself, is it?

**Gridlock:** Yes, of course, Lady Alice. I won't detain you any longer. I think everything's checked out here, Toby, so Fox and I will be leaving once DC Chase arrives.

**Kira:** **(Approaching Fox)** I don't suppose you'd consider breaking with police decorum and join me for a glass or two back at the dower cottage?

**Fox:** Oh, er, I don't think that's allowed really.

**Kira:** Too bad. There'd just be the two of us, you know.

**Gridlock:** What about your staff?

**Kira:** I've given them the day off.

**Gridlock:** All of them?

**Kira:** Well, all except for my butler, Quinn, but he's very short-sighted and hard of hearing. **(Spoken to Fox as she winks at him)** He's very discrete, you know.

**Toby:** Abbot. See Lady Alice out.

**Abbot:** Yes My Lord.

**Kira:** Well, you know where to find me should you change your mind. Cheerio.  
**(Abbot and Kira exit at centre stage right. Gridlock moves to the mantelpiece)**

**Gridlock:** This must be your father.

**Toby:** Yes. I didn't see much of him as a lad. He was always away, exploring up the jungle.

**Gridlock:** **(Picking up one of the photograph)** He was certainly a tough-looking man.

**Toby:** No. That's my uncle Sam. *This* is my father.  
**(Toby picks up the shrunken head and hands it to Gridlock)**

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**Gridlock:** Goodness.

**Fox:** Blimey. I thought your dad was declared missing.

**Toby:** Well, most of him still is.

**Fox:** I'd read that your father was the first westerner to make contact with the legendary Helarwee tribe of Brazil.

**Toby:** Indeed. Their chief, Wattacow, gave this and that **(Indicating the blowpipe)** to my family by way of an apology.  
**(Fox picks up the blowpipe. Gridlock replaces the photograph and then runs his finger along the top of the frames of each painting, examining his finger after having done so)**

**Toby:** It's a Helarwee blowpipe. They dip the darts in a deadly toxin made from tree frog poison.

**Fox:** Wow. I've read about these in National Geographic. The poison is fatal in under a minute and only members of the Helarwee tribe know how to make the antidote.

**Toby:** Ah, yes. You seem to be a very well-informed fellow, Detective Sergeant. What you didn't read is that we Teasdale's *also* know how to make the antidote. That was the third gift that Chief Wattacow gave us.

**Fox:** That's a handy thing to know.

**Toby:** The remedy is surprisingly simple. The two ingredients can be found in any kitchen cupboard.  
**(Gridlock hands the blowpipe to Fox who examines it then lifts it to his mouth as if about to play a recorder)**

**Toby:** Er, I wouldn't do that if I were you. It's still loaded.

**(Fox swiftly puts the blowpipe back on the mantelpiece. SFX. There's a knock on the door)**

**Toby:** Yes. Come in.

**Abbot:** **(Entering)** Excuse me, my Lord, but DC Chase has returned. She's waiting for her colleagues in the lobby.

**Gridlock:** Thank you, Abbot. We'll be leaving now, Toby, but we'll have to ask that nobody leaves Cringing Manor or the dower cottage until further notice.

**Toby:** Yes, of course. Bye for now.

**Gridlock:** Oh, there's one more thing. Your maid said that you had these pictures professionally cleaned.

**Toby:** Yes; that's right.

**Gridlock:** Could you tell me where that happens?

**Toby:** Er, right. Okay. That would be The Centre Art Gallery in Bristol. Mrs Quirrel, the picture restoration expert is the bod you need to see.

**Gridlock:** Thanks. Cheerio.

**(Lights down. Tabs close)**

#### Scene 4 – The lobby at Cringing Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. Juleee, Fox and Gridlock. Juleee carries an envelope. Alana enters from upstage centre)

- Juleee:** Well, I called in at the lab on the way over here and I've got the results.
- Fox:** We're all agog.
- Juleee:** A what?
- Fox:** You know, we're eagerly awaiting your news – *agog*.
- Juleee:** Well, in that case, *clever clogs*, shouldn't you say we're all gogs? How can we all be one gog?
- Fox:** No; it doesn't work that way.
- Juleee:** (Mimicking Fox in mocking tone) *No; it doesn't work that way.*
- Gridlock:** Never mind that now, you two. Do we know who he was?
- Juleee:** It seems that the dead bloke was Whispering Will after all. His DNA matched samples taken from crime scenes.
- Alana:** So, Toby was telling the truth.
- Fox:** It looks like it.
- Juleee:** And, there's more.
- Gridlock:** What?
- Juleee:** According to the DVLC and Passport Office, Lord Toby is *exactly* who he says he is. It's his picture on both documents.
- Alana:** That still doesn't explain why he didn't recognise Sommer when he shot her.
- Juleee:** Either way, we haven't really got any kind of case against Toby. It's clearly self-defence.
- Fox:** (Disappointed) So, that means we haven't actually got a murder to investigate.
- Gridlock:** I'm afraid not.
- Juleee:** Case closed then?
- Gridlock:** Those shoes still worry me though. Why wasn't there any wear on the soles?
- (Daily enters from centre stage right. He's carrying a file)
- Juleee:** Oh, hi again, Bill.
- Gridlock:** Dr Daily.
- Daily:** Hello all. I thought I'd find you three still here.
- Fox:** What have you got there, doctor?
- Daily:** I thought I'd take a peek and see how the forensic pathologist was getting on with the two bodies. This file was couriered over to me by your folk from Scotland Yard.
- Juleee:** You're so thorough, Bill, so professional.
- Gridlock:** And a very fast driver, it seems.



**Daily:** Anyway, everything checked out just as His Lordship said. Two bullet wounds etcetera; everything except for *this* that is.

**(Daily hands the file to Gridlock who opens it and reads a page)**

**Daily:** We know that his DNA and fingerprints are matches to samples from Whispering Will found at crime scene. I checked the dental records, and this chap came up.

**Gridlock:** **(Looking at the page)** So, Whispering Will's true identity was Gerry Fisher. His details were already in the system.

**Daily:** Yes. Gerry had been arrested when he was very young, for small time stuff – pickpocketing and lifting handbags.

**Juleee:** Wait a minute. Didn't lord Toby have a groom called Gerry?

**Fox:** Yeah. Gerry Fisher was the bloke that found Lord Toby after his accident.

**Juleee:** That can't be a coincidence, surely.

**Alana:** Then again, Gerry would know Cringing Manor very well from all the years he worked here. He'd be the perfect burglar.

**Fox:** Yeah. He'd know where all the valuable stuff was kept.

**Alana:** That's all very well, but are we meant to believe that Sommer was his partner in crime?

**Juleee:** It's odd that Ping didn't seem to know anything about Sommer's alleged engagement to Toby.

**Gridlock:** I think it's time that we paid another visit to Dr Ping.

**Alana:** Er, I don't think that'll be possible, I'm afraid.

**Juleee:** Why ever not?

**Alana:** She's completely disappeared. I've just telephoned her surgery, and her new secretary told me that the doctor didn't turn up for work this morning. She lives in the village with her sister, Lynne. She said the good doctor had just vanished, leaving all her clothes and stuff behind.

**Fox:** Two corpses and a missing doctor now.

**Juleee:** But, I spoke to Dr Ping today. I saw her. She recognised Toby from the picture. She confirmed that he was her patient.

**Alana:** Did you? Woah! Hang on a cotton-pickin' minute.

**Juleee:** What?

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**Alana:** Juleee. Describe Dr Ping.

**Juleee:** Well, she's youngish, blonde, and completely nuts.

**Alana:** So, not grey, gloomy, and in her early seventies?

**(Pause for 2 seconds as the truth dawns on Juleee)**

**Juleee:** No. Ah, I get it. That wasn't Ping, was it?

**Alana:** No. It must have been the doctor's kidnapper or even her killer that you were interviewing.

**Juleee:** I'm a total idiot. How could I be such a dimwit? **(Spoken to Fox)** This must be what it feels like to be you, Foxie.

**Fox:** Charming.

**Alana:** Don't blame yourself, Juleee.

**Gridlock:** So, with Ping's disappearing act, His Lordship in there might not be the real Toby after all.

**Fox:** Shall we arrest him, boss?

**Gridlock:** What for? We can't prove anything. His staff and even his own sister say that he's the real deal.

**Alana:** We haven't even got any samples of DNA or fingerprints from the real Lord Toby. He's not on the system.

**Fox:** We could compare his with his sister's DNA.

**Alana:** I hate to be a laterally thinking spoilsport here, but all that would prove is that they have the same or different DNA.

**Gridlock:** Yes. It wouldn't tell us if either of them were Teasdales.

**Juleee:** Wait. Did you interview his sister when I was gone?

**Fox:** Yes. A very nice lady, I'd say. Very classy. Good taste.

**(Juleee takes the picture of Alice to Gridlock)**

**Juleee:** And this is her?

**Gridlock:** Indeed it is. Alice.

**Juleee:** **(Peering close at the picture)** I don't believe it. I must be the world's leading buffoon. This is my Dr Ping impersonator.

**Fox:** Really?

**Juleee:** She must have got over here pretty fast.

**Fox:** So, Toby's dear sister's up to her neck in this whole business. Whatever *this business* is.

**Gridlock:** Certainly looks that way.

**Daily:** Sorry to interrupt, but I think I'll head off back to Bristol now.

**Gridlock:** Of course, Doctor Daily.

**Daily:** I don't seem to be needed here for the present.

**Juleee:** Nonsense. You'll always be needed, Bill.

**Daily:** As a forensic medical examiner, I'm not quite sure how to take that, but thanks anyway.

**Gridlock:** I've just had a thought. Mind if we cadge a lift to Bristol, Doc?

**Daily:** I suppose so. My radio's not working, so you lot will relieve the boredom.

**Gridlock:** You can drop us at the art gallery.

**Fox:** Chief.

**Gridlock:** Yes.

**Fox:** Why aren't we taking our car?

**Gridlock:** Simply because, if we leave it here, this lot will think we're still in the grounds, and that's what I want them to think.

**Fox:** Oh, I see. Brilliant idea.

**Gridlock:** **(Spoken loudly)** Right! Let's search the grounds everyone.

**Fox:** **(Shouted)** Let's split up. Juleee. You and Alana search the gardens and woods, and the chief and I'll check out the lake and the arboretum.

**Juleee:** You always have to go too far, don't you?

**Fox:** Just adding a bit of detail, you know - fleshing it out a bit.

**Fox:** **(Shouted)** We'll meet back at the fountain.

**Juleee:** Enough. They've got the message.

**Daily:** Are we off then?

**Gridlock:** Yes.

**Juleee:** **(Spoken to Fox)** *I'm* sitting in the front with Bill.

**(All exit at upstage centre)**

**(Lights down Tabs close. End of Act 1)**

## Act 2

### Scene 1 – The Centre Art Gallery

**(Tabs open. Lights up. The upstage wall has a display of pictures. One of them is a picture of children playing and another is of a young woman in a blue dress. There are four chairs positioned across centre stage, all facing the upstage wall. There are two book flats/screens at downstage right and downstage left, each displaying a picture. A young couple, Eve and Geoff, with their backs to the audience, occupy two of the seats. There are entrances at centre stage right, and downstage left. Grace and Jessica, both carrying clipboards and wearing name badges, are standing at downstage right)**

**Grace:** The real problem is, how do we shift them now that the police are sniffing about?

**Jessica:** Relax, Grace. Toby and Peter assure me that our buyers are happy to wait a bit until this thing's blown over.

**Grace:** There are two dead bodies now. This isn't going to blow over any time soon.

**Jessica:** Yeah, I suppose so. And now that nutter, Kira, has gone and bumped off a doctor.

**Grace:** She's a flippin' liability. He needs to dump her fast. Kira is out of control.

**Jessica:** You're right there. In the meantime, where are we going to display the two Manets that we've got on loan from Paris?

**Grace:** Haven't we got any space?

**Jessica:** Not an inch.

**Grace:** **(Dismissively)** Oh, just stick them up with the Monets. Nobody will know the difference.

**Jessica:** Yeah. Most people think they're the same person anyway.

**Grace:** Yes. I can't tell the difference.

**(Jessica and Grace continue their conversation in mime during Eve and Geoff's)**

**Eve:** Well, I think it's a lovely picture, Geoff - one of his best.

**Geoff:** It's not the actual technique I don't like, Megan, it's the subject.

**Eve:** It's called *children at play*, so what else would you expect to see in it?

**Geoff:** Children are a pain in the neck.

**Eve:** Oh, surely you don't mean that.

**Geoff:** I do. Babies are nothing but whining little brats that ooze secretions from every orifice and make constant noise. And when they get older, they're so needy, so in-your-face and constantly demanding stuff.

**Eve:** I didn't realise that you felt that way.

**Geoff:** Total nuisances, every single one.

**Eve:** **(Clearly upset)** Sometimes I find it hard to believe you're a teacher, Geoff.

**Geoff:** I mean, they take up so much of your time.

**Eve:** You know, I really don't know why I married you.

**Geoff:** What's brought this on?

**Eve:** **(On the verge of tears)** Come on; we're going.

**(Eve stands and we see that she's very pregnant. Followed by Geoff, and, in a huff, she exits at centre stage right. Geoff says his last line as he follows her. Gridlock, Julee, Alana, and Fox enter at downstage left. Alana carries a handbag containing a small radio receiver)**

**Geoff:** What's the matter? What have I done?

**Gridlock:** Hello. Which of you is Mrs Quirrel?

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**Grace:** That'd be me. Do call me Grace though. This is my assistant Jessica.

**Gridlock:** I'm Chief Inspector Gridlock. This is DS Fox, DC Chase, and...

**Alana:** **(Handing her card to Grace)** ...I'm Alana Sultana, private enquiry agent.

**Jessica:** Quite the delegation.

**Julee:** Aren't you meant to be at work, you know, being a *maid*?

**Alana:** This is my day off if you must know, and, besides, investigating is my *real* job.

**Grace:** What is this about?

**Fox:** Lord Teasdale tells me that you're responsible for cleaning his art works.

**Grace:** We've been looking after his family's paintings for many years.

**Gridlock:** And you clean them up here, in the gallery?

**Jessica:** Yes, but I'd hardly call it *cleaning*. There's much more to it than that.

**Gridlock:** Okay. If you say so.

**Jessica:** If you must know, it's a *highly* specialised job. Working on tiny areas at a time, we use soft clothes soaked in a special oil and then a thin trowel to scrape away the excess dirt before applying trefoil essence to the more damaged areas...

**Grace:** ...and finally we purge the whole canvas in an antistatic chamber for twelve hours.

**(1 second pause)**

**Gridlock:** So, *cleaning* then.

**Alana:** **(Spoken to Jessica)** I see that your surname is Abbot. Are you any relation to the butler at Cringing Manor?

**Jessica:** Oh, yes; Peter is my husband. Do you know him?

**Alana:** Not socially. We've just come from there.

**Fox:** We're investigating the deaths of two burglars that occurred there recently. We think that the thieves might have been after a Georges Cliché painting.

**Grace:** That wouldn't surprise me at all. The one they have there is pretty valuable.

**Gridlock:** How much?

**Grace:** Oh, somewhere in the region of £100,000.

**Fox:** What about the other painting at the manor? Aren't any of those valuable?

**Grace:** Well, not really. They're all pretty ho-hum really.

**Juleee:** Ho-hum? They must be really old, some of them.

**Jessica:** That doesn't make a painting worth anything. Besides the Cliché, there's a couple of Henry Bleaching sketches, but nothing else to sing about.

**Grace:** All together, you wouldn't get more than £3000 for the lot.

**Fox:** **(Pointing at the picture of the young woman)** What's this one worth?

**Grace:** Oh, that's *Girl With A Secret* by Hans Cratchin. It's valued at roughly four million quid.

**Gridlock:** Phew. Doesn't it worry you that it might get nicked or damaged here?

**Jessica:** Oh, they're all heavily insured, and besides, all of the expensive paintings you see in this gallery are on loan to us.

**Grace:** So, *Girl With A Secret* is loaned to us from Rotterdam and we've got two other Cratchin's in the next gallery. All three are here for two weeks. We often have a few loaned works from all over the world.

**Jessica:** We're incredibly lucky to have a Rembrandt and a Lowry on loan from a private collection.

**Gridlock:** **(Impressed)** Really? How long do you have *them* for?

**Jessica:** They arrived a week ago. We've only got them for another two days.

**Alana:** What's her secret?

**Jessica:** What?

**Alana:** What is the girl's secret in *Girl With A Secret*?

**Jessica:** We don't know. That's the whole point of its title.

**Alana:** Did Hans Cratchin know?

**Jessica:** **(Exasperated)** I have *no* idea. Is it really relevant to your investigation?

**Juleee:** Well, to be honest, it's not *her* investigation. This is a police matter. She's just along for the ride.

**Gridlock:** Alana is helping us as a police consultant.

**Alana:** **(Spoken to Juleee)** See; I *am* part of the investigation. **(Proudly)** I'm a police consultant.

**Juleee:** (Sulkily) Humph.

**Fox:** I'm glad your with us, Alana.

**Alana:** Thanks, Freddie.

**Juleee:** (Spoken in a mocking impersonation of Alana) Thanks, Freddie. Why don't you just get her number and be done with it?

**Fox:** (Taking out one of Alana's cards) Already got it.

**Grace:** Is that all you need us for, Chief Inspector?

**Gridlock:** Yes, for now. We'll contact you if we need you.

(Grace and Jessica exit at downstage left. Alana approaches the *Girl with a Secret* and touches the frame. SFX. An alarm sounds. Grace and Alex - a uniformed security officer - enter at downstage left. Alex grabs Alana by the arm)

**Alex:** Right! I've got her, Mrs Quirrel.

**Alana:** Ooh, you're *very* strong, aren't you?

**Alex:** Keep away from the picture please or I'll have to ask you to leave.

(Fox squares up to Alex)

**Fox:** Take your hands off that lady, at once.

**Grace:** It's alright, Alex. They're police.

**Fox:** Yeah. We're the police.

**Juleee:** (Pointing at Alana) *She's* not. Just us three.

(Alex unhands Alana and Fox Stares menacingly at him)

**Grace:** (Examining the painting) No harm done.

**Alex:** I'll be watching you.

**Alana:** (Flirtatiously) Goody. And *I'll* be watching *you*, Alex. Bye for now.

(Alex is embarrassed by this. He and Grace exit at downstage left)

**Juleee:** You're certainly not choosy about men, are you, Alana?

**Fox:** (Indignantly) Humph.

**Alana:** Chief Inspector. Did you notice the flecks of paint on Jessica's sleeve and hand?

**Gridlock:** No. I didn't.

**Juleee:** So what? She's an art restorer, isn't she?

**Alana:** Exactly. Paint is the very last thing you'd expect to see on her.

**Gridlock:** True. Go on.

**Alana:** And, more importantly, it seemed to be a particular shade of phthalo blue that's used right here in *Girl With A Secret*.

**Fox:** Oh, I see what you mean, Alana. Her dress is blue.

**Alana:** I went to art school for a while. I still remember the names of the colours. The blues were my favourites.

**Fox:** Wow! That's amazing. Blues are my favourite colours too.

**Juleee:** Alright Romeo; you've already got her number. You can pack all that in now.

**Gridlock:** So, you think there's a bit of art forgery going on here?

**Alana:** Yes, Chief Inspector. I suspect that those two are selecting the odd valuable picture on loan from other galleries and making copies of them.

**Fox:** So, this has got to be linked with the shootings at Cringing Manor...

**Juleee:** ...because Peter Abbot is Jessica's hubby...

**Gridlock:** ...and also, this is the place that Toby has his artwork cleaned.

**Alana:** Exactly! Now what we need to do is dodge out of sight behind that screen and we'll have all the proof we need.

**(Alana, Gridlock, Fox, and Juleee hide behind one of the book flat/screens, out of sight of other actors but seen by the audience. Alana takes the radio receiver from her handbag and tunes it)**

**Gridlock:** What are we doing here, Alana?

**Fox:** A radio?

**Alana:** I think we've put the wind up those two and they're already planning their next move.

**Juleee:** Oh, I see. That whole business with you touching the painting was a ploy wasn't it?

**Alana:** Yes. I slipped a small listening bug behind the picture frame.

**Gridlock:** So, *that's* the girl's secret.

**Fox:** So, you were just distracting the guard's attention back there?

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**Alana:** You mean Alex? Of course.

**Fox:** Oh, good.

**Alana:** Okay. Let's listen in. It's also taping everything said.

**(Grace and Jessica enter from downstage left and approach *Girl with a Secret*. At first they appear to be whispering their lines, unheard by the audience)**

**Juleee:** Turn it up a bit. We can't hear a thing.

**(Alana adjusts a dial. Juleee, Alana, Fox and Gridlock react appropriately to what they hear)**

**Grace:** **(Very loud)** Now that the cops are snooping around, we've got to make the swap.



**Juleee:** Woah! That's *way* too loud. Turn it down a bit, will you.

**(Alana does so and the rest of Jessica and Grace's lines are delivered at traditional stage volume)**

**Jessica:** You're right. Fleur in Rotterdam says everything's in place. All we've got to do now is what we always do.

**Grace:** Yeah. Put your fake up here, take this one to His Lordship and Peter and sell it on through our contact on the dark web.

**Jessica:** Will do, Grace.

**Grace:** The Rembrandt and the Lowry are still at the manor, so we'd better make sure they're out of sight when those clowns turn up there again.

**Jessica:** Do you think the coppers suspect anything?

**Grace:** I'm not sure. They seemed a bit dim to me.

**Jessica:** That's true. The detective sergeant seemed particularly dense.

**Grace:** Certainly; and what about the dozy private eye? **(Spoken in a mocking impersonation of Alana)** *What's her secret, do you think? Ooh, you're so strong, Alex. Oh, look at me everyone; I'm so cute and dippy.*

**Jessica:** **(Surprised)** You think she's cute?

**Grace:** What? No. She's a total bubblehead. I'm more worried about Gridlock. She seemed to be the smart one. A sharp customer I'd say.

**Jessica:** What about the other one?

**Grace:** No problem with her. She's clearly jealous of bubblehead PI and her relationship with thicko detective sergeant.

**Jessica:** Definitely. She's *well* into him. You can tell.

**Grace:** If any of them cause us grief, Kira will put them out of commission. Permanently.

**Jessica:** Yeah. It's times like this that her insanity comes in handy.

**Grace:** You're right there. Let's do the swap tonight.

**(Grace and Jessica exit at downstage left. Alana puts the radio receiver in the handbag. Fox and Juleee avoid eye-contact and Gridlock smiles to herself)**

**Gridlock:** Did you hear what Jessica said about Rotterdam?

**Juleee:** Yes. Fleur must be their partner in The Netherlands.

**Alana:** The only way they could carry off this forgery thing is if they have a tame art verifier in Rotterdam - their version of Grace.

**Fox:** And that person is Fleur.

**Alana:** When they return *Girl with a Secret* to Holland, Fleur gives it the thumbs up as the real thing.

**Fox:** So, nobody over there knows that they're rehanging a fake. Clever.

**Gridlock:** That way, they can sell the original to dodgy buyers for buckets of cash.

**Juleee:** They must've been doing this for a while. Toby and Peter hide the stolen masterpieces at Cringing Manor awaiting sale and nobody is the wiser.

**Gridlock:** The question is: where are they hidden and why kill Sommer and the other bloke?

**Juleee:** That's two questions, Chief.

**Fox:** And, why bump off Dr Ping?

**Gridlock:** Right. Alana. You and me are heading back to Cringing Manor to look for any stolen paintings.

**Alana:** Providing that they haven't sold them all on yet.

**Gridlock:** **(Spoken to Fox)** You and Juleee stay here, see what else you can turn up, and join us at the manor later.

**Fox:** Right ho, boss. See you later alligators.

**Juleee:** What? What was that?

**Fox:** It's just something I'm trying out.

**Juleee:** Well don't. It's not the 1950s.

**Alana:** Catch you soon, Freddie.

**(As Gridlock and Alana exit at downstage left, Alana and Fox exchange air-blown kisses)**

**Juleee:** Yuk! Wait there a minute.

**(Juleee approaches Girl with a Secret and reaches behind the frame then returns to Fox)**

**Fox:** What were you doing there?

**Juleee:** Buying us some insurance.

**Fox:** I think we should try to find out where Jessica's painting the forgeries. It's got to be here somewhere.

**Juleee:** Not necessarily. She might copy them at home.

**Fox:** I don't think so. If it was at home, Jessica would've noticed the paint on her hand when she was washing this morning, and, besides, there's paint on her sleeve as well.

**Juleee:** Oh, I get it. That could only happen if she did the forgery here at the gallery, in her work clothes.

**Fox:** Yes.

**Juleee:** You know, that's pretty good detective work, Foxie. Very perceptive. Smart thinking.

**Fox:** That's why *I'm* the detective sergeant and *you're* the detective constable.

**Juleee:** *And* now you've ruined it.

**(Kira enters from centre stage right, holding a handgun that's hidden by a coat draped over her arm. Wearing dark glasses and a beret, she approaches Fox and Juleee)**

**Kira:** Excuse me. Could you please tell me where the Monet's are displayed.

**Juleee:** Sorry. Can't help you. We don't work here.

**(Kira moves back the coat and reveals the handgun, its barrel pointing at them)**

**Kira:** Never mind. If you'd both like to follow me, I'll demonstrate some of my own painting – with *blood* instead of paint.

**(A slight pause as Fox and Juleee exchange puzzled looks and shake their heads)**

**Kira:** Human blood.

**(Fox and Juleee shrug their non-comprehension)**

**Kira:** **(Spoken with exasperation)** *Your* Blood! I'm going to kill you and do something macabre using your blood instead of paint. There! Is that clear enough?

**Juleee:** Oh, I see. What are you going to do with the blood though?

**Fox:** I don't want to know, to be honest.

**Kira:** Just shut up, the pair of you.

**Fox:** Hang on. You're Toby's sister, Lady Alice. I didn't recognise you with the glasses on, you know, and the beret. Hmmm. They really suit you.

**Juleee:** Oh, no. We've met before, Haven't we?

**Kira:** Full marks to you, plod.

**Juleee:** You're the fake Dr Ping. What have you done with the real doctor?

**Kira:** I strangled her with her own stethoscope. Alice is safe and sound though...

**Fox:** Thank goodness.

**Kira:** ...at the bottom of Toby's lake.

**Fox:** Oh.

**Juleee:** Why did you kill Alice?

**Fox:** Why kill Dr Ping for that matter?

**Kira:** I got rid of Alice because she figured out what we were up to. As for Dr Ping, you can ask her yourself soon enough.

**Fox:** How? I thought you said she was dead.

**Juleee:** **(Spoken with a sigh)** She means *we'll* be dead too so we can ask her.

**Fox:** Ah, yes. That makes sense.

**Juleee:** Grace and Jennifer told you that we were here, didn't they?

**Kira:** Enough talk, coppers. It's time for your final exit. That way, please.

**(Kira points towards centre stage right. At gunpoint, Fox and Juleee exit there followed by Kira. Fox and Juleee's next lines are spoken as they exit)**

**Fox:** Juleee.

**Juleee:** Yes. What?

**Fox:** Was Grace right, you know, when she said you're jealous of Alana?

**Juleee:** Huh. In your dreams, lover boy.

**(Lights down. Tabs close)**

## Scene 2 – A back room at The Centre Art Gallery

(Tabs open. Lights up. The two book flats/screens have been repositioned at centre stage to create a room which is lit while the rest of the stage is in darkness. Their paintings and upstage wall paintings have been removed and all but two of the chairs taken away. Fox and Juleee sit back to back on those, hands bound behind them. The room contains a blank canvas on an easel and a table with a painter's trowel, fake scalpel, two paint pots (One containing blue paint), brushes, handgun, pot of glue, and two lengths of narrow plastic tubing on it. Kira, wearing a white coat or apron, scalpel in one hand and paint brush in the other, stands gazing at the canvas)

**Kira:** (Musing) Hmm. I think I'll call my painting *a study in red*. I'll drain your blood into this pot and use it to create my masterpiece.

**Fox:** You're stark raving bonkers, Kira. You know that don't you?

**Kira:** Oh, flattery won't save you now, DS Fox. You had your chance.

**Juleee:** You can't call it *a study in red*.

**Kira:** And why not, pray tell?

**Juleee:** Dried blood is *brown*, not red. Your masterpiece would only be red for an hour or so, and then it'll turn brown.

**Kira:** Really?

**Juleee:** Of course. It'd look more like a dirty protest.

**Fox:** And, anyway, why go to all this trouble? Why not just shoot us?

**Juleee:** That's really not helping, Foxie. So, you must be Kira.

**Kira:** Yes, I must be, mustn't I?

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**Juleee:** How do you fit into all this?

**Kira:** I'm their problem solver, you might say. Anyway, this is going to hurt a lot.

**(Kira places the paint pot on the floor near her two victims and drapes the plastic tubes over their arms. She hovers over them with the fake scalpel)**

**Juleee:** Where is this place? Where are we?

**(Kira is about to cut into Juleee's arm with the fake scalpel)**

**Kira:** Oh, what now? So many questions.

**Juleee:** Where is this room? What is it used for?

**Kira:** (With a sigh) It's the restoration room. The name is self-explanatory. It's written on the door. Now, can we get on with this?

**Juleee:** (Shouts) Restoration room. Hurry!

**(A 2 second pause as the light gradually dawns on Kira)**

**Kira:** Oh, I see. You clever little plod.

**(Kira searches Juleee and finds the bug. She drops it on the floor and crushes it underfoot then hold the fake scalpel under Juleee's chin)**

**Kira:** You had a bug. Someone's listening in, aren't they?

**Juleee:** Yes. By now this place will be surrounded by police. You might as well give up before they storm this place.

**Kira:** Not before I gut you like a fish, you little...

**(Kira's line is interrupted by Gridlock entering swiftly at downstage left and shooting Kira in the arm with a handgun. SFX. Handgun shot. Kira drops the fake scalpel, clutches her left arm and collapses to her knees. Alana and Daily enter after Gridlock at downstage left and immediately untie Fox and Juleee)**

**Kira:** Ow. That really hurts.

**Fox:** Chief! Thanks goodness.

**(Gridlock gives handcuffs to Daily)**

**Gridlock:** Slap these on her will you, Bill.

**(Bill handcuffs Kira's hands so as they are in front of her body)**

**Bill:** Right ho, Chief Inspector.

**Juleee:** Phew! I'm glad that worked.

**Alana:** It's a good job I kept the radio receiver turned on otherwise you'd both be finished.

**Fox:** Thanks, Alana. You're so resourceful.

**Alana:** Your welcome, Freddie. I'm just glad we got here in time.

**Gridlock:** **(Spoken to Kira)** I am arresting you on suspicion of the murders of Lady Alice Teasdale and Dr Ping and the kidnapping and attempted murders of two police officers. You can remain silent, but anything you do say...

**Kira:** **(Cutting her off)** Forget it, plod. I'm saying nothing.

**Juleee:** That hardly matters. We've got your confessions to both murders on tape.

**(Fox and Alana look expectantly at Juleee)**

**Fox:** Well, Juleee? Haven't you got anything to say to Alana?

**Juleee:** **(Muttered reluctantly)** Thank you Alana.

**Fox:** What was that? Hmmm. Couldn't hear it. A bit louder, please.

**Juleee:** **(Louder but still begrudgingly)** Thanks Alana.

**Alana:** You're welcome Juleee.

**Fox:** Where did you get the gun Chief? We're not meant to be armed.

**Gridlock:** It was a birthday present from Juleee.

**Fox:** **(Incredulous)** You bought her a gun?

**Juleee:** Yes. It was for Janet's fortieth birthday. I wanted to get her something special.

**Gridlock:** I'd really rather you didn't call me Janet at work.

**Juleee:** Why not? You call me Juleee at work.

**Gridlock:** Can we not get into this now, please.

**Fox:** A gun? That was a daft thing to do, Juleee.

**Juleee:** Just let it go, Foxie. We're alive because of it. Nobody's harmed.

**Kira:** I am.

**Gridlock:** Oh, zip it, you nutter. Dr Daily. Could you put her in the car and wait for us there. We're heading back to Cringing Manor straight away.

**(Gridlock hands Daily the handgun. Daily and Kira exit at downstage left)**

**Daily:** Right you are, Chief Inspector.

**Kira:** **(Spoken to Daily, aside)** I won't forget this, Bill. It really hurts.

**Daily:** **(Spoken to Kira, aside)** This has to look convincing.

**(Daily leads Kira offstage at downstage left. Fox picks up and pockets Kira's gun from the table)**

**Fox:** Well, everyone else seems to have one.

**Juleee:** Wait a mo. Aren't we going to arrest Jessica and Grace?

**Gridlock:** They've skedaddled already and taken the real Cratchin painting with them.

**Juleee:** Oh, just one thing before we zoom off, Chief.

**(Juleee approaches the blank canvas and after first dipping a brush into one of the paint pots, paints a stick figure of a police officer in blue paint)**

**Gridlock:** What are you doing?

**Juleee:** **(Standing back to admire it)** *That* is a genuine constable.

**(Lights down. Tabs close)**

### Scene 3 – The lobby at Cringing Manor

**(Tabs open. Lights up. Footman, Gridlock, Daily, Alana, Juleee and Fox enter at upstage centre. Gridlock is carrying Gerry Fisher's file)**

**Juleee:** How the heck did she get away?

**Fox:** **(Rubbing his neck, struggling to speak)** Yeah. She nearly choked me to death. I mean, you're meant to cuff her hands behind her back not in front of her.

**Daily:** Well, surprisingly, as a *doctor*, I've never cuffed anyone before. I didn't know there was a particular way of doing it.

**(Alana takes Fox to the sofa and they sit together. Daily sits at upstage left)**

**Juleee:** You're not to blame, Bill. We should have explained that.

**Daily:** Thanks, Juleee.

**Footman:** I'll fetch you a drink of water, detective sergeant.

**Alana:** Thank you, Footman.

**(Abbot exits at centre stage right)**

**Gridlock:** It's my fault, Bill. I'm sorry. I should have cuffed her myself.

**Alana:** She can certainly run fast. She took off like a scalded cat.

**Juleee:** I've reported it. Every copper in Britain will be looking for her.

**Daily:** Kira will need to get that wound looked at too. She'll have to go to a hospital.

**Alana:** And, she'll have a job getting those handcuffs off, won't she?

**(Gridlock searches her pockets, looking increasingly worried)**

**Gridlock:** Ah. I might have been a little careless there.

**Alana:** She's pickpocketed your key, hasn't she, Chief Inspector?

**Gridlock:** I must be a total idiot.

**Juleee:** None of us have come out of this looking good, Chief.

**(Footman enters at centre stage right and brings water to Fox who drinks it. Daily fetches himself a drink and returns to upstage centre. Alana comforts Fox)**

**Alana:** It's very quiet round here, isn't it?

**Gridlock:** Yes it is. Where is everyone, Footman?

**Footman:** Well, I don't know where *everyone* is...

**Juleee:** **(Cutting him off, with a sigh)** *Just* the people in Cringing Manor. Where are they?

**Footman:** I don't rightly know.

**Alana:** Well, have you seen Abbot?

**Footman:** Oh, yes.



**Alana:** Go on.  
**Footman:** What?  
**Alana:** Where? When?  
**Footman:** Every day, really. Not always at the same time, mind you.  
**Alana:** Have you seen him *today*?  
**Footman:** Oh, no. Will that be all?  
**Alana:** Yes. Thanks. You've been very helpful.

**(Footman exits at upstage centre)**

**Juleee:** Er, can I have a quiet word, Chief?

**Gridlock:** Of course.

**(Juleee leads Gridlock to downstage right for a private conversation)**

**Juleee:** Kira was sat in the back of the car, between you and Bill. Right?

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**Gridlock:** Yes. What are you driving at?

**Juleee:** Well, how could she pickpocket your key whilst still handcuffed? Only you or Bill could've taken that key out of your pocket.

**Gridlock:** Goodness; you're right. But, I've known Bill for years. I can't imagine him helping a murderer escape.

**Juleee:** The only other possibility is that the other passenger in the back of the car lifted your key and slipped it to Kira.

**Gridlock:** That was Fox though. He was sat to Bill's right, so he would've had to lean across Bill and Kira to reach my pocket. I would've noticed that.

**Juleee:** And, besides, Kira almost strangled Freddie with those cuffs. So...

**Gridlock:** ...We need to keep a close eye on Bill.

**Juleee:** Exactly.

**(Cook enters at centre stage right. Juleee and Gridlock join Daily at upstage left, Gridlock sitting and Juleee standing)**

**Cook:** How wuz your search, Chief Inspector? Did you find anything?

**Gridlock:** Oh, no; we drew a blank there, I'm afraid.

**Cook:** Well, it's just that oi 'appened to notice there's something roite queer loike, down by the allotments. Oi saw it when oi wuz fetchin' a marrow for the cook this afternoon, about an hour ago.

**Gridlock:** What was it?

**Cook:** It was a large vegetable; sort of loike a big courgette.

**Juleee:** No. What did you see down by the allotment?

**Cook:** Well, I don't know roitly 'ow to say this, and oi might be speakin' out of turn loike, but it was Abbot, our butler. He wuz pushin' a wheelbarrow down towards the lake.

**Alana:** Did you see what was in the wheelbarrow?

**Cook:** Oi only got a glimpse, but it looked loike our old scarecrow, covered in a bit of sacking.

**Juleee:** Did you see where he went with it?

**Cook:** No. Oi 'ad to get back here with the marrow.

**Gridlock:** Interesting. Thank you.

**Juleee:** A scarecrow?

**Cook:** Er, you won't go tellin' Abbot that oi said that, will you?

**Gridlock:** Of course not.

**Cook:** I'm obliged. Always ready to do my bit for the law.  
**(Cook exits at upstage centre)**

**Fox:** That's better. I've got my voice back.

**Juleee:** That's a shame. I wonder what Abbot was doing. Come to think of it. Where is he now?

**Alana:** That's right. You'd expect him to be here when we arrived.

**Gridlock:** It sounds to me that, as soon as he heard that we were off to search the grounds, he was anxious to get rid of something.

**Alana:** Or *someone*.

**Juleee:** In the lake, it seems.

**Gridlock:** I've just had a thought.  
**(Gridlock opens the file, removes a photo of Gerry and hands it to Juleee)**

**Gridlock:** Juleee. Take a shot of this picture of Gerry Fisher.  
**(Juleee takes out her mobile phone and does so)**

**Gridlock:** Ah, the wonders of modern technology. Now, send it to the DVLC with this message: *Urgent request from Scotland Yard. Is this the current photo ID that you have on record for lord Tobias Teasdale?*

**Juleee:** **(Taps the keypad)** And...done.

**Gridlock:** I think I've had it all the wrong way around.

**Alana:** What is it, Chief Inspector?

**Gridlock:** I'm pretty sure that the man who visited Ping's surgery was actually Gerry Fisher, a genuine paraplegic. He'd been Lord Toby's groom.

**(SFX. Juleee's mobile phone rings and she reads the text)**

- Juleee:** That was quick. Yes. That's the current photo that they've got for Toby.
- Alana:** So, it was Gerry who'd been crippled in a riding accident all those years ago, not His Lordship. Sir Toby must have paid Gerry to pretend to be himself so everyone would believe His Lordship couldn't walk.
- Gridlock:** And that gave Toby the perfect series of alibis for all his art thefts. After all, how could a man using a wheelchair be the mysterious Whispering Will?
- Fox:** Wow. So, Sommer was engaged to Gerry...
- Alana:** ...who she believed to be Sir Toby.
- Juleee:** When she came to Cringing Manor to confront him, she must've found her fiancé, Gerry, dead and the *real* Toby holding the gun.
- Fox:** She just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Poor Sommer.
- Alana:** Yes. She saw a light on as she came up the drive and knocked on the French window. Toby let her in and...
- Fox:** Bang! Another burglar bites the dust.
- Alana:** I think Gerry had become greedy, you see, demanding more and more money to keep quiet about the deception.
- Gridlock:** So, Toby's managed to kill off two people who could've pointed the finger at him, and he's staged it so he wouldn't even need to get rid of the bodies or the weapon. He got us to do both of those things for him.
- Fox:** Brilliant. He's played us like an old banjo.
- Juleee:** That's not an expression.
- Fox:** He's led us a merry dance - had us chasing our own tails like a herd of headless chickens.
- Juleee:** Flock! It's a *flock* of chickens, you idiot, not a herd.
- Fox:** Still, you've got to give him credit. He's baited us like mice in a trap, running around like frightened rabbits.
- Juleee:** Make him stop, Chief. Please.
- Fox:** He's had us barking up the wrong tree like a...
- Gridlock:** **(Cutting him off, shouting)** Fox!
- Fox:** Yeah; a fox. I was going to say *dogs*, but a fox barks as well.
- Gridlock:** No. I mean, be quiet Fox! Just put a sock in it, will you.
- Fox:** Er, okay, Chief. Sorry.
- (Abbot, in shirtsleeves and somewhat dishevelled, enters at upstage centre. He stops in the doorway, surprised and alarmed to see Gridlock and her team. Alana hides in front of the sofa.)**
- Juleee:** Well, look what the cat dragged in.
- Abbot:** Oh...I didn't expect you to be here, Chief Inspector.

**Gridlock:** Obviously.

**Juleee:** Been doing a bit of gardening, Abbot?

**Abbot:** Ah, yes. That's what I've been doing. Gardening.

**Gridlock:** Down by the lake, I believe.

**Abbot:** Oh, yes. I was...fishing.

**Fox:** Fishing *and* gardening?

**Abbot:** Er, yes; I like to keep busy. Well, I must go and get washed and changed. Call for Jenny the maid if you need anything. Our other maid, Zoe, seems to have disappeared.

**(Abbot exits at upstage centre. Maid enters, unseen, at centre stage right and lurks near the doorway, listening. Alana stands and joins Gridiron)**

**Daily:** He's definitely up to something.

**Fox:** You're not kidding.

**Gridlock:** I think it's high time we confronted Toby about all this

**(Daily spots Maid. She hushes him with a finger held to her lips. He nods to her in reply. Maid exits at centre stage right)**

**Juleee:** I can't see what the point is, Chief. We haven't got anything on him. There's nothing to link him with the art thefts and the shootings will be seen as self-defence by any jury.

**Gridlock:** You're right, of course. The trial's in two days' time. We'd better leave it until then. We might as well shove off for now.

**(Gridlock, Alana and Daily exit at upstage centre. Fox stands and Juleee joins him for a private word)**

**Juleee:** Do you remember the codeword, Foxie?

**Fox:** Of course. It's *scot free*.

**Juleee:** Exactly.

**Fox:** Technically, *scot free* is two words, so it can't be a code word can it? It's actually a code phrase.

**Juleee:** Belt up. That's my signal.

**Fox:** So, *belt up* is the signal?

**Juleee:** No, you plonker; *scot free* is the signal. Is that actually clear?

**Fox:** As a bell.

**(Lights down. Tabs close)**

#### Scene 4 – Toby’s room at Cringing Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. Maid enters at centre stage right carrying a cushion. It is identical to the two on the sofa. She replaces one of those with hers and exits at centre stage right, carrying the original with her. Seconds later, Toby Abbot, Gridlock, Alana, Juleee, Fox, and Daily enter at centre stage right)

**Toby:** Look, I know that you’re only doing your job, Chief Inspector, but I haven’t been found guilty of any offence here. In fact, the judge praised my bravery in defending myself and my property against vicious burglars.

**Gridlock:** That’s all very well, Toby, but we’ve reason to believe that there may be stolen artwork here in Cringing Manor.

**Toby:** *Your Lordship.*

**Gridlock:** What?

**Toby:** I think I’d prefer it if you called me by my proper title now, Chief Inspector.

**Juleee:** I reckon you’ve struck a nerve there, boss.

**Toby:** Can you show them out please, Abbot.

**Abbot:** Yes, Your Lordship.

**Juleee:** So, that’s it, Chief. They’re going to get away with everything. *Scot free.*

**(Pause for two seconds as Fox is blissfully unaware of the signal)**

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**Juleee:** I said, *scot free!*

**(Fox suddenly picks up the blowpipe from mantelpiece and shoots Toby in the neck)**

**Toby:** Ow! What the heck?

**Gridlock:** If I’m not mistaken that poison will kill you in under a minute.

**(Daily rushes to Toby, pulls the dart out from his neck and then fetches him a glass of water from the jug on the coffee table)**

**Toby:** For pity’s sake, Gridlock. Do something. Daily. Help me Bill.

**Gridlock:** Not to worry. You Teasdales know how to make the antidote and, as you said, *the two ingredients can be found in any kitchen cupboard.*

**Alana:** Yeah. Abbot here can fetch them if you tell him what they are.

**Toby:** For goodness’ sake, help me someone. I’m dying.

**Abbot:** **(Pointing the gun at Fox)** That was very clever, DS Fox. How did you guess that he wasn’t the real Toby?

**Fox:** I didn’t actually...until now. **(Spoken to Toby)** You’re Gerry Fisher, Toby’s groom. You’re an imposter, a thief and a murderer.

**Juleee:** It was *you* who was paralysed in a riding accident all those years ago. Just like the chief said.

**Gridlock:** Get tired of your arrangement with His Lordship, did you? Pretending to be him at Dr Ping's? Wanted so much more didn't you?

**Toby:** Please; do something. I don't want to die.

**Alana:** Neither did Sommer nor Lord Toby.

**Fox:** Or Dr Ping - or Alice for that matter.

**Juleee:** Yeah. Bet you're sorry you had Alice bumped off now, aren't you? She'd have come in pretty handy right now.

**Gridlock:** Alright, Gerry. I'll make a deal. If your *father* here hands me that gun and you both sign these confessions, I'll save your life.

**(Abbot gives the handgun to Gridlock. Fox takes out two prewritten confessions to Abbot and Toby who quickly read them)**

**Alana:** His father? Abbot is Gerry's dad?

**Gridlock:** Of course. Like father, like son; a family of murdering crooks.

**Alana:** How did you know?

**Gridlock:** Well, when I first met Gerry, I noticed that his thumbs were unusually stubby, you know, stunted.

**Fox:** Oh, so that's why you inspected the staff's hands.

**Gridlock:** Precisely. I knew it was a genetic trait, so, when I saw Abbot's stubby thumbs, I realised that the man in the wheelchair was related to him.

**Alana:** And, because of the age difference, you figured that Abbot was an older relative.

**Toby:** **(Urgently)** Yes, yes. He's my dad. Very clever of you, but can we hurry this along a bit. I'm dying you know.

**Alana:** **(Spoken to Toby)** So, Jennifer's your mother? She seems a bit young.

**Toby:** She's my stepmother. Now, can you please get me the antidote.

**Juleee:** I'm finding it hard to believe that you had these confessions already printed and ready to sign.

**Gridlock:** I believe in being prepared for all outcomes.

**Abbot:** Er. Has anyone got a pen?

**Juleee:** Not *every* outcome then, Chief.

**Toby:** Yes, quick! A pen. A pen. Hurry.

**Fox:** This is a *very* long minute.

**(Juleee takes out her pen and hands it to Toby. He signs and hands it on to Abbot who also signs. A slight pause as Juleee looks expectantly at Abbot)**

**Juleee:** I'll have my pen back, if you don't mind, Abbot.

**Abbot** **(Handing tit back to her)** Oh, yes, of course.

**Fox:** Once a thief, always a thief, I suppose.

**(Alana picks up the shrunken head and looks at it)**

**Alana:** You know, I recognise this thing. It's the head of a Bratz doll. I used to have one like this, with the matching body.

**Fox:** So, that's not really Lord Teasdale's head?

**Alana:** No. Not unless he was a fashion doll of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Juleee:** So, the blowpipe's most likely a fake as well.

**Fox:** **(Scrutinising it)** Oh, yes. I hadn't notice that before. It's got *made in Japan* written on it.

**Toby:** Phew!

**Abbot:** Damnation!

**Toby:** We've been hoodwinked, Peter.

**Gridlock:** Yes. Fake pictures, fake sister, fake head, fake poison dart and, *two* fake doctors.

**Juleee:** What?

**Gridlock:** Isn't that right, Bill? You're working with them, aren't you?

**Daily:** Is...is this some sort of joke, Gridlock?

**Gridlock:** I only wish it was, Bill. You've been much too involved with this whole business, haven't you?

**Daily:** I can't think what you mean.

**Gridlock:** Oh, come off it man. For a start, it was you who gave us the wrong times of death for the burglars. The real Toby had been done in by Abbot here a day before the burglary.

**Juleee:** You also identified Gerry as the body from his dental records.

**Alana:** And, as for you, Gerry - It was only when Sommer came here the next night to confront you that you saw a golden opportunity.

**Juleee:** You killed her in cold blood. The woman that you'd asked to marry you.

**(A pause as Alana, Gridlock and Fox look expectantly at Fox)**

**Fox:** **(Suddenly realising)** Oh, yes, sorry. It's my turn, isn't it? Then you and Abbot dragged Toby's body out into the lobby alongside Sommer and set up the whole two dead burglars charade.

**Alana:** You already had a passport and driving licence proving that you were Lord Toby. Dr Ping had unwittingly certified them both.

**Gridlock:** With Dr Bill willing to give fake times of deaths and identify Toby's body as yourself, you'd never be convicted.

**Juleee:** You got the police and your tame quack here to dispose of both murder victims and you didn't have to lift a finger.

**Abbot:** They've rumbled you Bill. Gridlock knows you're one of us.

**(Daily suddenly throws the glass of water over Gridlock who drops the handgun. SFX. Gunshot. Alana drops to her knees with a yelp. Fox rushes to her and she passes out in his arms)**

**Fox:** Alana! Speak to me.

**(Daily takes out his gun and trains it on Gridlock. He then picks up Gridlock's gun and hands it to Toby who covers the other three)**

**Fox:** **(With exasperated disbelief)** You bought it for her as a present?

**Toby:** So, it's time to dispose of four nosey coppers.

**Juleee:** It's *three* nosey coppers, if you don't mind. She's not one.

**Fox:** You've got to help Alana, Bill. She's been badly wounded.

**(Daily hands his gun to Abbot and goes to help Alana)**

**Toby:** Don't bother with that, Bill. She's going to end up in the lake anyway.

**Daily:** I have to help her, Gerry. I took an oath. Hasn't there been enough killings? Couldn't we just tie them up somewhere and do a runner with the pictures and the money?

**Toby:** That's part of the problem, Bill; we've taken over Toby's crime business, but we don't know where he hid the stolen pictures.

**Abbot:** That's the only part of this caper he didn't share with Gerry and me.

**Toby:** Yeah. Toby and Peter started it all, nicking art, creating the *Whispering Will* legend...

**Abbot:** ...then we took it up a gear, you might say. Jessica and Grace replacing pictures with fakes and getting Gerry to hide them here before selling them on via the dark web.

**Juleee:** So, you can't find the artwork?

**Toby:** Yes. We've looked everywhere. It's the one thing he kept secret from me. I don't suppose you've any idea where Toby might've hidden them?

**Gridlock:** Juleee doesn't, but I know *exactly* where they are.

**Abbot:** You're bluffing, plod.

**Gridlock:** If I were bluffing, how would I know that there are *two* pictures hidden here somewhere? They're a Rembrandt and a Lowry.

**Abbot:** How can she know that?

**Toby:** **(Surprised)** That's very clever of you. Now, if you tell us where they are, we'll be on our way and we'll spare your lives.

**Daily:** Don't tell them, Chief Inspector. They're going to kill us all anyway.

**Abbot:** I don't know about you, Gerry, but I think it's time we ended our association with the good doctor here.

**(Abbot takes aim at Daily and pulls the trigger)**

**Juleee:** No! Bill!

**(SFX. A click betrays the empty chambers in the handgun. Abbot stares at the handgun in disbelief. Daily launches himself at Abbot and knocks him to the ground, winding him and pinning him down)**

**Daily:** I never keep it loaded. Remember the Hippocratic oath: *do no harm*.

**Abbot:** Ow! That hurts.



**Daily:** I think I'll make an exception in your case, Peter.  
**(Daily pockets Abbot's unloaded gun)**

**Toby:** Time to say cheerio, Gridlock.

**Gridlock:** Chief Inspector Gridlock.

**Toby:** What?

**Gridlock:** It's *Chief Inspector Gridlock*. I think I'd prefer you to use my correct title now, Gerry.

**Toby:** Very Well. Cheerio, *Chief Inspector*.  
**(Toby points his handgun at Gridlock and pulls the trigger. SFX. Again, clicks betrays the empty chambers in the handgun. Toby drops the gun. Gridlock opens her hand to reveal six bullets. Alana leaps to her feet, grabs Toby's chair by the handles and pushes it through the French windows at downstage left. SFX. Loud crash of glass as he disappears from view offstage)**

**Toby:** Aah!

**Fox:** So, you were just faking it, Alana?

**Alana:** No. I did all that in my sleep and with a bullet in my leg.

**Fox:** Wow. That's incredible. So brave.

**Juleee:** Forget it, Alana; he doesn't get sarcasm.

**Gridlock:** Good work. Fox. You'd better go and retrieve Gerry.  
**(Fox exits at downstage left. Gridlock picks up the gun, loads it with the bullets and pops it into her pocket)**

**Juleee:** Thanks for helping us, Bill. Even though you've turned out to be a filthy double-crossing dirt-bag.

**Daily:** It's the least I could do.

**Gridlock:** Make yourself useful, Dr Daily. Slap these on Abbot.

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**(Gridlock throws a set of handcuffs to Daily who puts them on Abbot and roughly helps him to his feet)**

**Gridlock:** I'm glad you've finally seen sense and decided to help us. You'll most likely get a reduced sentence for that.

**Daily:** Really? Do you think so, Chief Inspector?

**Gridlock:** No. Not really. I don't know why I said that.

**Daily:** Anyway, I'm truly sorry that I ever got involved in all this.

**Gridlock:** You let Kiera escape, didn't you, Bill?

**Daily:** Yes. I'm sorry. I expect she's a thousand miles away by now.

**(Gridlock's gaze is directed towards centre stage right as its door slowly opens to reveal Kira with a fake two-barrelled shotgun)**

**Kira:** Wrong! Stick 'em up everyone. I've always wanted to say that.

**(All except Abbot raise their hands)**

**Kira:** Now, look, I haven't got long and, besides, there's only two shots in this little beauty, so, unless you want to be one of the unlucky two, don't try anything.

**Daily:** Stop this. Put the gun away. It's all over.

**Kira:** Maybe for you, Bill, but I'm leaving here with those two pictures and you clowns can spend the rest of your stupid lives trying to find me.

**(Fox enters at downstage left, unseen by the others. He is pushing Toby in his wheelchair. Toby has been gagged with a handkerchief and Fox is pointing a gun at Kira)**

**Fox:** Put the gun down, Alice.

**Juleee:** She's Kira, you idiot.

**Fox:** So, it's a Mexican stand-off.

**Juleee:** Wrong. There'd have to be *three* guns for one of those.

**(Daily pulls out the unloaded gun and trains it on Kira)**

**Bill:** Three guns it is. Drop it, Kira.

**Kira:** Ah, brother dearest. You've swapped sides, I see.

**Alana:** Brother? Kira's your sister.

**Daily:** To my everlasting shame. Yes.

**Kira:** Put the gun down, little brother. You're in this up to your neck.

**Daily:** I'm sick of dancing to your tune, Kira. You've manipulated me my whole life.

**Kira:** Oh, boo hoo.

**Daily:** Shut up, you maniac. I'm only involved in this because you've been blackmailing me all these years.

**Juleee:** Pretty good twist this, isn't it?

**Kira:** Whatever would you do if I told everyone your dirty little secret, Billy Bunter?

**Daily:** Don't call me that. Just stop that. I'm not overweight anymore. It doesn't make sense now.

**Kira:** **(Sings)** Fatty Bill went up the hill, eating chips and chilli...

**Daily:** **(Practically in tears)** Shut up! Shut up! Stop!

**Kira:** Oh, stop your blubbering, blubber boy.

**Daily:** Stop it. Shut up. I hate you.

**Kira:** I tell you what. DS Fox; you choose which one I blast to pieces before I get shot.

**Fox:** What?

**Kira:** Juleee or Alana?

**Juleee:** You've got to be kidding.

**Kira:** It's simple. Let me go or I'll shoot DC smart-Alec here *or* your dippy girlfriend. It's your choice.

**Alana:** Is that right Freddie? I'm your girlfriend?

**Fox:** Yes. If you'd like that.

**Alana:** I'd love that.

**Fox:** Me too.

**Juleee:** Oh, for goodness' sake. This is sick making. I'm your partner, Foxie. Doesn't that count for anything?

**Gridlock:** I don't think you've quite grasped the situation, Kira. There are *two* guns trained on you. You're going to get shot anyway.

**Kira:** Nope. Bleeding-heart Bill always keeps his piece unloaded. Everyone knows that. And, anyway, Fox here might miss.

**Juleee:** That's true. He is a rubbish shot.

**Gridlock:** That's not helping, Juleee.

**Kira:** Go on. *Choose* one, Fox. If I'm going to get plugged, I might as well have a bit of fun first.

**(Fox looks agonisingly between Alana and Juleee)**

**Alana:** Choose me Freddie.

**Fox:** What? No.

**Alana:** Juleee's your partner. You've trusted each other with your lives. You hardly know me. Let her shoot me.

**(Kira swings the gun to point at Alana)**

**Kira:** Good. Now we're getting somewhere.

**Juleee:** Oh, no. That's not happening. There's no way you're grabbing the moral high ground here, Miss goody-goody Sultana.

**Kira:** Oh, what now?

**Juleee:** Choose me, Foxie. I won't stand in the way of true love. Think of all those ghastly children you'll make together.

**(Kira points the gun at Juleee)**

**Alana:** I love you Freddie. Do it for me. Do it for all the cases that you and Juleee will solve and all the lives that you'll save together.

**(Kira swings the gun to point at Alana)**

**Juleee:** Oh, put a sock in it, Miss self-sacrifice. Make it quick, Kira. Shoot me. At least then I won't have to listen to any more of her melodramatic bilge.

**(Kira points the gun at Juleee again. Alana takes a step forward, closes her eyes and throws her arms open wide, offering a clear target)**

**Alana:** I forgive you, Freddie. Remember me.  
(Unseen by the others, Gridlock takes her gun out and points it at Kira)

**Kira:** You know, I'm tempted to shoot both of them.  
(Gridlock aims at Kira. SFX. Gunshot. Kira drops the shotgun and clutches her right arm. Bill picks up Kira's shotgun and trains it on her. Fox pockets his gun and puts handcuffs on Kira)

**Kira:** Ouch! Not again.

**Fox:** Good shooting, Chief.

**Juleee:** Not such a stupid present after all, is it Foxie?

**Gridlock:** Thanks Juleee. I've been practicing my aim at the range, just like you said. Right. I think it's high time that we got this lot down to the cells.  
(Bill hands the shotgun to Fox, puts his hands behind his back, and Juleee handcuffs him. Alana reveals a bullet-proof vest hidden beneath her top)

**Fox:** (Surprised) You're wearing a bullet-proof vest?

**Juleee:** That's cheating.

**Alana:** Safety first, I always say.

**Kira:** I was going to shoot you in the head anyway.

**Daily:** There's been enough killings, Kira. It's time to stop all this.

**Kira:** Don't worry, Billy. Your secret is safe with me – until I need another favour that is.

**Daily:** Forget it, Kira. I'm going to fess up. I'm tired of living this lie.

**Juleee:** What is it Bill? What's the lie?

**Daily:** Gridlock's right. I am a *fake*. I never qualified as a doctor. Twenty years ago, I was a decorator, painting the canteen at Bristol Hospital. I was wearing a face mask because of the fumes and a white coat. A nurse mistook me for a doctor and asked me to look at a patient in the A and E unit. I correctly diagnosed lupus because I'd watched so many episodes of *House* and that word seemed to crop up a great deal.

**Alana:** Gosh. So, you've kept up the pretence all this time?

**Daily:** I couldn't help myself. Next thing I knew I was consulting on all sorts of things, treating emergency cases and prescribing drugs. It all got so out of hand. The hospital put me on a salary and gave me my own office.

**Fox:** You had us all fooled, Bill.

**Daily:** I'm truly sorry it worked out this way, Juleee. (With a weak smile) I suppose another date is out of the question now?

**Juleee:** Oh, you never know, Bill; you might be out in ten years or so, with good behaviour. I mean, you haven't actually killed anyone.

**Fox:** (Quoting her) *You haven't actually killed anyone?* That's how low you've set the bar? You're not exactly choosy, are you?

**Juleee:** I turned *you* down, didn't I?

**Fox:** Touché.

**Alana:** So, where are the pictures, Chief Inspector?

**Gridlock:** Ah. It's obvious really.

**(Gridlock approaches the two oil paintings)**

**Gridlock:** They're right here.

**(Gridlock takes down the portrait of a man and tears away the canvas to reveal, hidden behind it, a Lowry painting. The others make sounds of amazement)**

**Gridlock:** This is the stolen Lowry and hidden behind that one **(points at the other painting)** is the Rembrandt, both stolen from the gallery and replaced with Jessica's forgeries.

**Juleee:** Wow.

**Alana:** That's amazing. How did you know that?

**Gridlock:** Well, when I learned that His Lordship's pictures were sent to the gallery for cleaning, it seemed that the best way to smuggle the stolen ones back here.

**Juleee:** So, Jessica and Grace would hide them behind these ones.

**Alana:** Hidden in plain sight.

**Fox:** Yes, but how did you know they were hidden behind these two particular pictures?

**Gridlock:** When we first arrived here, the maid, Jenny, told us that the pictures were sent away to be cleaned, All except these two had dusty frames, so I'd assume that these pictures have recently had them cleaned.

**Juleee:** Oh, I get it. Jessica would *definitely* have wiped her fingerprints from the frame after the swap had been made.

**Gridlock:** Exactly. Also, it makes sense that Toby would always want the stolen ones here, in his room, where he could keep an eye on them.

**Fox:** What about the shoes, Chief?

**Gridlock:** Shoes?

**Fox:** Yes. You were puzzled by the lack of wear on the dead guy's shoes.

**Gridlock:** Yes. That really threw me at first. I thought that must mean that the body was that of Lord Toby himself.

**Alana:** Because he wouldn't have been able to walk in them?

**Juleee:** But that wouldn't have made sense because, as it turns out, Toby was faking it. He could walk. It's Gerry here who can't.

**Gridlock:** Ah, yes. Remember though, besides Toby himself, only Abbot and Gerry knew he was faking it. The rest of the staff would need to see that he had no wear on his shoes. After all, one of them would've cleaned them.

**(Unseen by the others, Maid enters at downstage left and hands Toby a note. Toby reads the note as Maid exits swiftly at downstage right)**

**Toby:** **(Urgently, still gagged)** Humph, humph.

**Fox:** What is it, Toby?

**(Fox ungags him)**

**Juleee:** He's *Gerry*, you dingbat. Toby's most likely at the bottom of the lake along with his poor sister.

**Fox:** Ah, so that's who Abbot had in the wheelbarrow.

**Juleee:** Well, duh.

**Toby:** Can I speak now?

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**Gridlock:** Go ahead, Gerry.

**Toby:** I'm rather afraid that none of us will be leaving here any time soon.

**Alana:** Why?

**Toby:** Grace has planted a bomb in this room. She's just out there (**points towards downstage left**) with a remote detonator.

**(They all look towards downstage left)**

**Fox:** That's Jenny the maid, isn't it?

**Toby:** It's Grace in disguise. (**Reading the note**) She says that we're to place the Rembrandt and the Lowry outside the French Windows...

**Juleee:** ...Or what's left of them...

**Toby:** ...and then...

**Grace:** (**Spoken from offstage, interrupting**)...Oh, do shut up, Gerry. Just give me the pictures and a ten minute start and I'll disarm the bomb. Fail to do so and boom! You're all blown to bits. It's a simple choice.

**Alana:** But, that'd destroy the pictures as well.

**Grace:** That's a risk I'm willing to take. The question is: Are you?

**Gridlock:** She makes a good point there.

**(Alana tries unsuccessfully to open the door at centre stage right)**

**Grace:** I'll give you two minutes to reach a decision. Oh, and don't go reaching for any guns.

**Daily:** Couldn't we just sneak out through the lobby?

**Alana:** We're locked in.

**Kira:** Grace. After all I've done for you lot, aren't you at least going to let me go?

**Grace:** Nope.

**Kira:** Fair enough. It was worth a shot.

**Abbot:** What about Jessica?

**Grace:** Oh, she's out here with me. We're going to sell the pics and split it between us. It's decision time. Two minutes, starting now.

**Abbot:** **(Calling)** Jess. What are you doing? You can't just take off with her and leave me here. We're married, Jess.

**Jessica:** Think of this as a trial separation, Peter.

**(Gridlock looks around the room)**

**Juleee:** I think we should just give her the pictures, Chief.

**Gridlock:** No. They'd just blow us up anyway.

**Abbot:** Gridlock's right. It's exactly what they'd do.

**Alana:** That's your wife you're talking about. Why the heck did you marry her?

**Abbot:** She said she'd break my arms if I didn't.

**Gridlock:** Now, where's that bomb?

**Fox:** Hey! I've just got it.

**Juleee:** What? What have you got?

**Fox:** Peter Abbot here is married to Jessica. So, that makes her Jessica Abbot.

**(Juleee gives him a *so what* expressions)**

**Fox:** You know, like in that film, *Who framed Roger Rabbit*. She's Jessica Rabbit.

**Juleee:** Oh, for goodness' sake; grow up, will you. We haven't got time for this stuff.

**Gridlock:** Aha! Got you.

**(Gridlock crawls behind the sofa, out of Grace's sightline, grabs a cushion from the sofa and rattles it and puts it to her ear)**

**Gridlock:** The bomb's in here. It's ticking.

**Alana:** Quick! Give it to me.

**(Alana drops onto her stomach and crawls towards Gridlock)**

**Daily:** Do you know how to defuse it?

**Alana:** Sort of.

**Juleee:** That's comforting.

**(Gridlock crawls across the floor towards Alana, carrying the cushion and keeping out of Grace's sightline. They meet at downstage centre, and she hands the cushion to Alana who stands and, with a cry, hurls the cushion offstage at downstage left)**

**Alana:** Aaaaah!

**(They all look anxiously towards downstage left. Gridlock stands and Alana dusts off her hands)**

**Alana:** There. Always choose the simplest solution.

**(After a three second pause, the cushion is thrown back onto stage from downstage left)**

**Grace:** Nice try, plod.

**Juleee:** She's *not* a plod. *We're* the plods.

**Fox:** And, the bomb's back.

**Grace:** Time's almost up.

**Gridlock:** Alright, you win. I'll bring the pictures out.

**Grace:** Wise choice, Gridlock.

**(Gridlock quickly grabs the other cushion from the sofa, unzips it, and, moving to the mantelpiece, stuffs the clock inside, zips it up again and hurls it offstage at downstage left. Alana grabs the bomb cushion and does the same)**

**Jessica:** **(Panicked, spoken from offstage)** There's *two*. Which one's got the bomb in, Grace?

**Grace:** The heavier one, you idiot.

**Jessica:** They're both heavy.

**Grace:** Oh, for goodness' sake; it'll be the one that's ticking.

**Jessica:** They're both ticking.

**Grace:** Blimey. Do I have to do everything myself? Chuck them both back, you numpty.

**Fox:** Quick - while they're distracted.

**(Fox moves to downstage and takes aim with the handgun. SFX. Two gunshots)**

**Grace:** Ow! My leg.

**Jessica:** Ouch! I've been shot.

**(All look offstage towards downstage left)**

**Daily:** Excellent shooting DS Fox.

**Juleee:** You've been practising, haven't you, Foxie?

**Fox:** Correct.

**Gridlock:** Good work. Right! Juleee and Fox; get out there and cuff those two.

**Juleee:** We haven't got any handcuffs left, boss.

**(Gridlock takes cable ties from her pocket and hands them to Fox and Juleee)**

**Gridlock:** Here's some cable ties. Use them instead.

**Juleee:** You just happened to have some cable ties?

**Gridlock:** Remember? I believe in being prepared for *all* circumstances.

**(Juleee and Fox exit at downstage left)**

**Alana:** How did you know the bomb was in the cushion, Chief Inspector?

**Gridlock:** When we were last in this room, Fox spilled sherry on one of the two cushions and I noticed, just now, that *neither* of them had a stain.

**Alana:** So, one must have been replaced.

**Gridlock:** Yes. We already knew that this room hadn't been cleaned since our last visit, so the stain should still be there.



**Alana:** You know, it's been great working with you, Chief Inspector.

**Gridlock:** You've been a very valuable member of the team, Alana.

**(Juleee and Fox – who carries one cushion - enter at downstage left, leading Jessica and Maid/Grace, their hands tied behind their back. Jessica hobbles)**

**Juleee:** Hey, Grace. I thought *you* were meant to be wounded in the leg?

**(Grace immediately starts to hobble as they are led to the sofa and made to sit)**

**Juleee:** That's better.

**Fox:** **(With delight)** Grace! She's called Grace Quirrel. They've got to be made-up names, surely.

**Juleee:** Give it a rest, will you.

**Fox:** Oh, and don't forget *him*: Gerry Fisher. *Jeremy Fisher* is a frog, another Beatrix Potter character, like Peter Rabbit. It's all making sense now.

**Gridlock:** Where's the other cushion?

**Fox:** I could only find this one.

**Alana:** Unzip the cover. Look inside.

**(Fox does so, reaches in and pulls out the clock)**

**Fox:** That's a bit of a worry, isn't it? I wonder where the bomb cushion is?

**Daily:** More importantly, where is the detonator?

**Grace:** Don't look at me. I dropped it somewhere after that numbskull shot me.

**Gridlock:** So, the bomb and its detonator are both missing. Well, they're bound to be around here somewhere. Juleee. See if you can get the bomb squad and a sniffer dog over here from Bristol.

**Juleee:** Right ho, Chief.

**(Juleee takes out her mobile phone taps a few keys. A slight pause)**

**Juleee:** Hello. Debbie. It's Juleee here. Can you get the bomb team and a sniffer dog out here to Cringing Manor, please. There's an unexploded cushion in the grounds somewhere.

**(Slight pause)**

**Juleee:** Seriously? You're asking what it looks like? There will only be one cushion, Debs.

**(Slight pause)**

**Juleee:** So, Sniffy's got a bad cold. Well, they'll just have to manage without a dog.

**Gridlock:** Tell her I'll wait for them here.

**Juleee:** Chief Inspector Gridlock will meet them here. Cheers. Twenty minutes. Ta. Give Sniffy a stroke from me. All done boss.

**(Juleee pockets her mobile)**

**Alana:** You know, I'm sorry that I left the force now. I've learned such a lot from you three.

**Juleee:** **(Surprised)** So, you were a plod after all?

**Alana:** Yes. I was a constable in the Bristol constabulary for three years. I had to give it up to nurse my sick mother.

**Gridlock:** Well, if you're still interested, I can put in a word for you. We could do with a detective constable with your skills.

**Alana:** I'd really appreciate that. Thanks.

**Fox:** Wow! We could be partners one day.

**Alana:** Well, Freddie, I was hoping we could be partners right now.

**Fox:** Oh, yes; of course. I meant, you know, the *other* kind of partners as well.

**Juleee:** Plod partners.

**Fox:** Exactly.

**Alana:** Both kinds. *Detective Constable Sultana*. That has a nice sound to it.

**Gridlock:** It does. And how does *Detective Sergeant Chase* sound, Juleee?

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**Juleee:** What? Are you serious, boss?

**Gridlock:** Absolutely. I'm recommending you for a promotion with immediate effect.

**Juleee:** Brilliant! You're the best, Chief.

**(Alana and Juleee hug)**

**Fox:** What about me, Chief?

**Gridlock:** What?

**Fox:** Don't I get a promotion too?

**Gridlock:** In good time, Freddie. I'll know when you're ready.

**Fox:** How will you know when I'm ready?

**(Gridlock takes a cable tie from her pocket and hold it up)**

**Gridlock:** When you're prepared for *all* circumstances.

**Fox:** Ah. Smart thinking, Chief.

**Gridlock:** Right. Fox and Juleee. Let's get this lot down to the station. We'll have to take both cars. Grab those painting please, Alana. We'll drop them at the Victoria Art Gallery in Bath. We can't trust anybody at the Bristol gallery.

**Juleee:** So, with there being no Teasdales left alive, I wonder who's going to inherit this lot?

**Fox:** **(Picking up picture from mantelpiece)** It might all go to this guy – Uncle Sam.

**Gridlock:** Who can say? Off you go.

**(All except Gridlock exit at upstage centre, Julee leading Daily, Abbot, Kira and Jessica whilst Fox wheels Toby/Gerry. Gridlock looks around the room, searching for something. Lights down. Tabs close)**

## Scene 5 – Toby’s room at Cringing Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. Uncle Sam stands at centre stage. The mantelpiece is now empty, and the paintings and photographs have been removed as have the books, shrunken head and blow pipe. The handheld bomb detonator is under the sofa. Sam’s son and daughter, Frank and Harriet enter at upstage centre, each carrying a large box. Frank’s box contains two paintings They set them down at centre stage right and survey the room)

**Harriet:** Phew. This place is huge, dad.

**Frank:** (Playfully) Or should we call you, *Your Lordship* now?

**Uncle Sam:** I’d much prefer *dad* or just plain *Sam*. *Lord Teasdale* sounds a bit ridiculous.

**Harriet:** It’s two hundred acres. Can you believe that?

**Uncle Sam:** It’s going to take a bit of getting used to after living in our little bungalow.

**Frank:** (Opening and looking into his box) Where do you want the pictures, dad?

(Frank takes two framed oil paintings from the box, held so that the audience can’t see the pictures themselves)

**Uncle Sam:** Well, I think we might as well stick them up there, over the mantel piece.

(Frank takes the paintings to Sam at centre stage where they are joined by Harriet. They admire the oil paintings, their pictures still unseen by the audience)

**Uncle Sam:** They’re gorgeous. As soon as I saw these at the Bristol gallery, I knew we had to own them. I thought we should splash out a bit, you know.

**Harriet:** How much did you say they cost us?

**Uncle Sam:** This one’s by Giselle Krank. It cost us a million quid. That one is particularly special – cost *three million*.

**Harriet:** You’re joking. It’s like something a baby would paint with their fingers.

**Frank:** It’s a bit basic.

**Uncle Sam:** It’s a 20<sup>th</sup> century style called *naive art*. The artist didn’t sign it, but it’s believed to be an early Lowry.

(Frank carries both pictures to the mantelpiece and hangs them. One is seen to be a traditional landscape and the other is Juleee’s *genuine constable stick drawing* from Act 2 scene 2)

**Uncle Sam:** There. Perfect.

**Frank:** Well, if you like it dad, that’s all that matters.

(Harriet, noticing the bomb detonator underneath the sofa, picks it up and moves back to Frank and Sam at the mantelpiece)

**Harriet:** What do you think this is?

**Uncle Sam:** I’ve no idea.

**Frank:** Beats me.

**Harriet:** It's got this red button on the top.

**Frank:** It's probably for calling the servants, you know – like a modern bell pull.

**Harriet:** I'm going to press it.

**(Harriet presses the button. SFX. A massive explosion from offstage. Harriet, Frank and Sam, all shaken, look towards downstage left)**

**Frank:** What the dickens?

**Harriet:** (Sheepishly) Sorry.

**Uncle Sam:** I never liked that fountain anyway.

**(Lights down. Tabs close. The end)**