

Characters

Fantana (F)	A Sharp-witted police inspector
Lady R (F)	Lord Rigby's widow. A cultured and well-bred lady
Ralph (M)	Lady R's amiable nephew
Freddy (M)	Lord Rigby's heavy-drinking, wastrel of a brother
Self (F/M)	Lord Rigby's lugubrious butler
Millie (F)	A young maid. She's flaky but eager to please
Chess* (F)	A young, smart yet cynical detective constable
Tripp (M)	A young, finicky yet sharp detective sergeant
Wilf (M)	An elderly gamekeeper who's a bit of a gossip
Wendy (F)	Lady R's kind-hearted niece
Sore (M)	The slightly tetchy and serious doctor
Carlos (M)	Lord Rigby's laid back driver
Yvette (F)	Lord Rigby's friendly and professional groom
Nicki (F)	Lord Rigby's sullen and impatient cook

*The performer playing the role of Chess should be disguised when pretending to be the maid, Hannah. In addition to the maid's costume, glasses and a wig might expediate the transformation.

The bodies of Mary and Lord Rigby are doubling opportunities

Scene 1 – Lord Rigby’s study at Marden Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. The door, at upstage centre, is partly open into the study with its narrow edge facing centre stage left. There’s a couch and footstool at downstage right. A smart desk is at centre stage with a hard-backed chair behind it. There is a notepad, a pen, an open diary, a lamp, a telephone, and a framed photograph on the desk. A potted cactus is on a table at upstage left. The body of Lord Rigby, gun in his outstretched hand, lies on a rug at downstage left. A piece of embroidery in a frame is hung on the upstage right wall and about four-and-a-half feet up from the stage. An unfaded section of wall at upstage left shows us the room divider’s original position to the left of the door.

Lying flat on stage, directly in front of the embroidery at upstage right is a 6ft high bi-folding room divider (screen). Its top edge is facing downstage and the body of Mary lies face down lengthways on top of it with her head towards the audience. We hear the first three lines of this scene spoken from offstage.)

Ralph: In here, Inspector.

Fantana: And nothing’s been moved since the bodies were found?

Ralph: No. Nothing.

(Fantana, Chess, Tripp, Millie, and Ralph enter through the door at upstage centre. Tripp carries a notepad and pencil. Chess has a fingerprint dusting kit. The three police officers wear crime scene gloves and have evidence bags in their pockets)

Fantana: And you’ve telephoned for the doctor?

Ralph: Yes. Doctor Sore is on his way.

Fantana: This is your uncle, Lord Rigby?

Ralph: Yes.

Fantana: And this, I take it, is his housekeeper, Mary Hawes?

Ralph: Yes.

Fantana: Chess.

Chess: Boss?

Fantana: Could you check for prints.

(Chess starts dusting. Tripp kneels to examine Mary and Fantana kneels to examine Lord Rigby)

Fantana: Single gunshot wound to the head. Close range.

(Fantana stands)

Fantana: So, Mister Miller...

Ralph: ...Ralph. Please call me Ralph.

Fantana: Who was the first person to enter here, Ralph, after the shot was heard?

Ralph: That was Ms Self.

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Fantana: I see. Who entered after yourself?

Ralph: Oh, that would have been you and these two detectives.

Fantana: So, you were the first in here after the shot was heard?

Ralph: No; I was the second to arrive.

Fantana: Wait! That can't be right. Didn't you just say that it was yourself that got here first?

Ralph: Oh, no; I see. That was a bit confusing, wasn't it? *Ms Self*, my butler, came in first – Evlyn Self. It was Self that found the bodies.

(Tripp stands. Self enters at upstage centre and coughs politely)

Ralph: Ah, here's Ms Self now. **(Spoken to Self)** This is Inspector Fantana, Detective Sergeant Hazzard, and Detective Constable Board.

(Self gives a curt bow to the three police officers)

Fantana: Mister Miller tells me that you were the first to find the bodies.

Self: Indeed, Inspector. I was cleaning the silver in the pantry when I heard a gunshot.

Fantana: Was the door locked?

Self: No, Inspector. I would have no reason to lock myself in the pantry.

Fantana: I mean, was *this* door locked? **(Indicates the study door).**

Self: Yes. His Lordship always kept this door locked when he was working on his memoires.

(Self indicates the open diary on the desk)

Self: I used my own key to enter.

Tripp: And nothing's been moved in here since then?

Ralph: Not as far as I know

(Chess is now dusting the gun for prints. Tripp removes a thin two inch long dart from Mary's upper back and brings it to Fantana who takes it and sniffs it)

Fantana: Poisoned. Smells like cyanide.
(Fantana bags the dart and pockets it)

Tripp: The dart was in her back, boss.

Fantana: **(Spoken to Millie)** When was the last time you cleaned this room?

Millie: Oh, let me see. I dust I here every two days, so that would be...Let me think...er...
(Slight pause as Millie tries to remember)

Millie: What day is it today?

Tripp: Wednesday.
(Millie counts on her fingers and mouths the days)

Millie: Well, it would have been Monday, about two.

Fantana: Was His Lordship in here then?

Millie: Oh, yes. He was always writing at his desk.

Fantana: Did you happen to notice anything different about him then?
(Millie screws up her eyes in concentration and then looks first at His Lordship's body and then at the desk)

Millie: **(Drawn out, hesitant)** Well, he was...

Fantana: **(Cutting her off, with a sigh)** ...I mean other than him being alive.
(A slight pause as Millie considers this. She then shakes her head from side-to-side signalling a definite 'no')

Millie: No then. nothing.
(Chess stands. Carrying a bullet, she joins Fantana)

Chess: His Lordship's fingerprints on the gun. None on the remaining bullets though.

Fantana: A murder made to look like a suicide then.

Chess: Looks like it, boss. The killer wore gloves to load the weapon. Sloppy mistake.

Ralph: What on earth has happened here?

Fantana: It's too early to say. Are there any other guns in the house?

Ralph: My auntie, Lady Rigby, has a small automatic gun in her bedside drawer.

Fantana: We'll need to examine that.

Ralph: Of course, Inspector. **(Spoken to Self)** Can you fetch it for the inspector, Self.

Self: Right away, sir.
(Self exits at upstage centre. Chess dusts the desk as Tripp picks up the diary and looks at the last entry)

Fantana: I gather that Lady Rigby has been told what's happened.

Ralph: Yes. Auntie was at St. Mary's visiting the dean with my sister, Wendy. I've telephoned the rectory and they're on their way here now.

(Tripp picks up the journal)

Tripp: This is very interesting.

Fantana: What is it, Tripp?

Tripp: It's a journal. His Lordship's memoirs. It's open on today's date.

Fantana: What has he written?

Tripp: His latest entry: **(Reading aloud)** *I simply can't continue with this dreadful charade. My whole reputation is built on a gross and shameful deception and the truth must come out. Herman knew everything. I had no choice. Today is the day that I tell my beloved Eleanor the terrible truth.*

Ralph: Eleanor is Lady Rigby, my auntie. She and Uncle Digby adopted me and my sister Wendy when our parents died in a plane crash. Our dad was auntie's brother.

Chess: Nice bit of exposition, Ralph.

Ralph: **(Uncertainly)** Oh, er...thanks.

Tripp: Actually, that's more of a back-story than exposition.

Chess: **(Both pronounced the same)** Potato, potato.

Tripp: Potato, *po-tah-tow*, you mean.

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Chess: What?

Tripp: That's how you're meant to say that.

Chess: Who says so?

Tripp: George and Ira Gershwin say so. It's from one of their songs. **(Sings)** *You like potato and I like po-tah-tow. You like tom-may-tow and I like to-mah-tow. Potato, po-tah-tow, tom-may-tow, to-mah-tow. Let's call the whole thing off.*

(Ralph and Millie applaud)

Ralph: Jolly good show.

Millie: Lovely.

Chess: **(Ironically, demonstratively)** Oh, well, of course. If it's from a song then it *must* be true. Why didn't you say that before? If I'd known that it was from a song, I'd never have questioned you, Tripp.

(Tripp shrugs and sighs in resignation. Fantana stares angrily at the pair of them)

Fantana: Can we get on with this now?

Both: Yes, boss. Sorry.

(Self enters at upstage centre carrying an empty drawer and hands it to Fantana. Self has a small gun concealed in her pocket)

Fantana: No; I wanted to examine her Ladyship's gun not her bedside drawer.

Self: With all due respect, Inspector, you didn't make that at all clear.

(With a smirk, Self takes the gun from a pocket and hands it to Fantana who receives it with a sigh and a curt nod and hands it on to Chess. Fantana returns the drawer to Self who exits with it and returns immediately without it)

Chess: **(Sniffing the barrel)** Not been fired recently.

Fantana: **(Reading aloud)** *I simply can't continue with this dreadful charade. My whole reputation is built on a gross and shameful deception...* **(Spoken to Ralph)** Have you any idea what your uncle meant by his *shameful deception*?

Ralph: I've no idea what it means.

Chess: His Lordship was a famous explorer, wasn't he?

Ralph: Oh, yes. He spent many years exploring the dense jungles of Amazonia searching for ancient relics.

Tripp: His greatest achievement was finding the ancient lost city of Exslaxx. I read that in a copy of National Geographic magazine in the dentist's waiting room when I was waiting to have a broken tooth filled.

Chess: A bit too *much* back-story there, Tripp.

Tripp: Lord Rigby wrote: *Herman knew everything. I had no choice.* Who is Herman?

Ralph: Herman was my uncle's accountant. He made all the financial decisions. He lived here at Marden Manor.

Fantana: Where is Herman now?

Ralph: He just vanished.

Tripp: Vanished?

Ralph: Yes. Herman and Daisy our cook disappeared a month or so ago.

(Self coughs)

Ralph: Yes? What is it, Self?

Self: I apologise for interrupting, Mister Ralph but there was the note.

Fantana: Note?

Ralph: Oh yes. Herman left a note saying that he and Daisy had run away to start a new life together.

Fantana: **(Thoughtful, spoken to herself)** Running away from what?

(Self coughs)

Ralph: Yes?

(Self hands a postcard to Ralph who reads it and hands it on to Fantana)

Self: I received this postcard from Herman a week ago.

Fantana: **(Reading aloud)** *Dear Ms Self, Daisy and I are blissfully happy here on the beautiful island of Guernsey. We got hitched at a registry office and today we're driving over to Saint Sampson to check out a little farm we're planning to buy. We're going to settle here and grow prize winning tomatoes. We hope you are well. Give our best to Millie and the rest of the staff. Regards, Herman.*

Tripp: I'll assume you want us to ask those two a few questions, boss.

Fantana: Certainly. We must speak to them. Their disappearance is very suspicious.

(Fantana hands the postcard to Chess who glances at the message side)

Chess: The postmark is definitely from the Channel Islands.

(Doctor Sore enters at upstage centre carrying his medical bag and two folded sheets. Chess hands the postcard back to Fantana)

Ralph: Ah, Doctor Sore.

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Sore: Good morning Mister Miller, detectives. I got here as soon as I could. For some reason they've closed Marlborough High Street yet again.

(Sore and Fantana exchange glances)

Sore: **(Sourly)** Fantana.

Fantana: **(With a curt nod)** Sore.

(Sore examines the bodies. Fantana scans the desk)

Chess: **(Spoken aside to Tripp)** There seems to be a bit of tension between Doctor Sore and the boss, doesn't there?

Tripp: **(Spoken aside, confidentially)** Well it seems, according to Janine in Traffic Division, that Sore and the boss were at university together years ago and they had a big falling out.

Chess: What did they fall out about?

Tripp: Well, Janine says she doesn't know the exact details but it was about breakfast cereal.

Chess: Cereal? How the heck does Janine know that? And...come to think of it, why did she tell you?

Tripp: Well, if you must know, Janine told me when we were on a date and the boss told Janine at a boozy girls' night out last Easter

Chess: You and Janine are dating?

Tripp: Yes.

Chess: **(Angrily)** They were on a boozy girls' night out? That's...that's just sexist. That sort of stereotypical behaviour is demeaning. It's pathetic.

Tripp: They didn't invite you, did they?

Chess: **(Petulantly, folding arms)** No.
(Self coughs)

Ralph: Yes. What is it, Self?

Self: Nothing, Mister Ralph. That was just a cough.
(Fantana retrieves the bagged dart from her pocket. Sore covers each body with a sheet)

Sore: **(Standing)** His Lordship died from a fatal gunshot wound and Mary was poisoned with cyanide. There's a small hole in her upper back possibly from a syringe.

Fantana: Sore.

Sore: It was bound to be, yes.

Fantana: No. I was going to show you this, Doctor Sore.
(Fantana hands the bagged dart to Sore)

Sore: That would certainly do it. A blowpipe dart if I'm not mistaken. Only, in this case, not fired from a blowpipe. There's no way the dart could've penetrated the fabric of her clothes. It's been pressed in with some force.

Chess: So, the killer must've been standing close to her.

Fantana: That seems to suggest it was His Lordship.

Chess: Unless there was a third person in here.

Fantana: Our killer must be still here in the house. Make sure that no one leaves here, Self.

Self: I have already taken the liberty of instructing the staff not to do so.

Fantana: Thank you Ms Self. That was very forward thinking of you.
(With a warm smile, Self nods a brief 'you're welcome')

Tripp: Can you confirm times of deaths, Doctor Sore?

Sore: Well...let me see. What time was the shot heard?
(Ralph look at Self)

Self: I heard a gunshot from this room at nine o'clock.

Sore: And what time is it now?

Chess: **(Examining her watch)** One O'clock.

Sore: Then I'd say his Lordship has been dead no longer than four hours.

Fantana: And Mary?

Sore: **(Tetchily)** I was coming to that. I can say with some degree of certainty that, since death from cyanide is almost instantaneous, Mary has been dead for at least four hours.

Fantana: What make you think that?

Sore: Well, if I really need to spell it out for you, Fantana: If Mary had died before Lord Rigby then His Lordship would've surely mentioned to someone that there was a dead housekeeper in his study when he entered here. If His Lordship had died before Mary then that would leave just a few seconds for her to be poisoned before the butler entered on hearing the gunshot *four hours ago*.

(All except Fantana nod in agreement. Sore hands the bagged dart back to Fantana. Lady Rigby and Wendy enter. Lady Rigby almost faints and is helped to the couch by Sore. Ralph joins Wendy who stands frozen in horror)

Lady R: I can't believe it. It can't be true. Digby and Mary. Dead.

Sore: Try to remain calm, Eleanor.

Lady R: Oh, Cole. What has happened?

Sore: Could someone please fetch Her Ladyship a drink. The inspector is trying to find out exactly what's happened, Eleanor.

(Ralph signals to Self to do so and, in turn, Self signals Millie to fetch the drinks. Wendy perches on the arm of the couch)

Wendy: This is like a bad dream.

Fantana: I am Inspector Fantana, Your Ladyship. This is Detective Sergeant Hazzard, and Detective Constable Board.

(Lady R nods weakly)

Self: Bring the sherry.

Millie: Yes, Ms Self.

(Millie begins to exit then pauses and addresses Tripp)

Millie: Beg pardon but you have a lovely singing voice, detective.

Tripp: **(Brightly)** Thank you, Millie.

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Self: **(Sternly)** On your way, Millie. Hurry it along.

Millie: Yes, Ms Self. Sorry.

(Millie exits with a coy smile and little wave in Tripp's direction. Tripp smiles and waves back)

Chess: **(Spoken to Tripp)** Stop that or I'll tell Janine.

Tripp: **(Defensively)** What? I'm not doing anything.

(Fantana moves to the desk, picks up the framed photograph and looks at it)

Fantana: Who are the man and woman in this photograph with Lord and Lady Rigby?

Ralph: That's Colonel Toby Shawe. He was in the same regiment as Uncle Digby when they did their National Service. Colonel Toby went with Uncle Digby on all his expeditions. They were great friends.

Chess: You said they *were* great friends. Is the colonel still around?

Ralph: Sadly, no. He disappeared twenty years ago in the Amazonian jungle during my uncle's expedition to find Exslaxx. That lady is Toby's wife, Marjorie. It broke her completely when Toby vanished.

Fantana: I notice that, of the four of you, only Marjorie is sitting in this picture.

Lady R: I think she must've been tired that day.

(Lady R joins Fantana at the desk. Fantana hands the photograph to her)

Lady R: Dear sweet Toby. We all miss him. He was like a brother to my husband.

Fantana: When was this photograph taken?

Lady R: Let me see. That was a day out we had at Brighton over twenty years ago.

(Millie enters at upstage centre with a bottle of sherry)

Self: **(With a deep sigh)** Glasses, Millie. We'll need glasses.

Millie: Oh, yes. Sorry Ms Self.

(Millie exits with bottle. Sore comforts Lady R)

Lady R: Oh, Cole; how can this be happening? First the pigs and now this.

Fantana: Pigs, Your Ladyship?

Lady R: My extremely rare Wiltshire two-spot pigs all died mysteriously last month.

Ralph: All six of them.

Fantana: How did they die?

Lady R: The vet said they'd been poisoned. Cyanide she thought.

Tripp: That can't be a coincidence.

(Millie enters at upstage centre with a tray of five glasses and no bottle of sherry)

Self: The bottle, Millie. We'll need the bottle.

Millie: Oops! Sorry Ms Self. I'll forget my own head if I'm not careful.

Self: We can only hope.

(Millie starts to exit with the tray of glasses. Self stops her in her tracks)

Self: Wait! Leave the tray.

(Millie hands the tray of glasses to Self who places it on the table next to the potted cactus. Millie then exits and re-enters with the bottle during Fantana's next four lines, pours some sherry into a glass and takes it to Lady R)

Fantana: **(Suddenly inspired)** Poison! That's it. I think I might have an idea how the pigs died. Can I see that postcard again, Chess.

(Chess hands the postcard to Fantana examines it briefly)

Chess: What is it?

Fantana: This postcard is a fake. You were right about the postmark, Chess. It's a clever forgery, but the sender forgot that you can only affix Guernsey stamps to a card posted from the island. This is a British stamp.

(Lady R is about to drink her sherry when Fantana suddenly snatches it from her hand and takes it to the table where she pours it over the potted cactus. The cactus starts to droop and die. All gasp)

Millie: **(Horrorified)** The cactus's dying.

Fantana: That sherry is poisoned with the same cyanide that was used to kill Mary and Lady Rigby's pigs.

Sore: Someone was trying to kill you, Eleanor.

(Sore takes Lady R's hand)

Tripp: You mean to say that Herman and Daisy were murdered?

Fantana: I believe they were poisoned and the pigs managed to dig up or find their hidden bodies, eat them and, in turn, the poor pigs died.

Tripp: Who stands to inherit your husband's wealth and land, Your Ladyship?

Lady R: On Digby's death, myself, Ralph, and Wendy each get a third of the estate and fortune. Should any of the three die, the remaining two get their third.

Wendy: Self would get the guest house and a yearly income of £20,000.

Lady R: And Digby's lazy oaf of a brother, Freddy, would get £100, 0000 and the pick of my uncle's antiques collection.

Fantana: Where is Freddy now?

Lady R: Oh, don't worry. You'll see that bloodsucking leech soon enough. He'll be on his way over here now that there's money coming his way.

Tripp: So, five people stand to gain from His Lordship's death

Chess: Yes. Why kill the housekeeper though?

Fantana: There's a dangerous killer in this house. We haven't a moment to lose. Ms Self

Self: Yes, Inspector.

Fantana: I'd like you to gather all the staff here as soon as possible.

Self: Right away, Inspector.

(Self exits then Millie moans in pain, clutches her stomach and collapses. Sore and Tripp rush to her aid)

Ralph: Millie! What's the matter?

Sore: **(Smelling her breath)** Cyanide. We'd better act fast.

(Sore retrieves his bag, opens it, removes a small bottle and brings it to Millie)

Millie: **(Weakly)** I'm sorry, Mister Ralph. I only took a little sip. I've never had sherry before. Ooooh.

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(Millie moans in pain)

Ralph: **(Sympathetically)** Oh, Millie. Never mind that.

Sore: **(Putting the bottle to her lips)** Here; drink this. It'll purge you.

(Turning her head away from the audience, Millie vomits loudly)

Sore: That should do it.

Fantana: Great work, Cole. You've saved her life.

(A slight pause as Sore stands and scrutinises Fantana. Tripp helps Millie to her feet and take her to sit at the desk. He perches on the desk comforting her)

Sore: **(Gruffly)** Only doing my duty, Penny. If it wasn't for you, Eleanor would be dead.

(Fantana and Sore shake hands. Chess joins Tripp and Millie)

Fantana: Let's put all that university nonsense behind us, shall we. Start again.

Sore: Certainly. It wasn't worth falling out over.

Fantana: You're right, Cole. When it comes down to it, Cyril didn't really belong to either of us. Nobody really owns a cat.

Chess: **(Spoken aside to Tripp)** They fell out over *Cyril* not *cereal*. Janine is an idiot.

Tripp: **(Spoken aside to Chess)** They were all drunk and probably slurring their words that night. **(Huffily)** And, for your information, Janine is *not* an idiot. She can complete The Times crossword in twenty minutes.

Chess: Big deal. So can I.

Tripp: **(Incredulously)** No way! Can you?

Chess: Piece of cake.

Chess: If you want me to fill in the *correct* answers, that's a different matter.

Fantana: How is Dinah? I hear that you two got married after college.

Sore: **(With sadness)** We did. I'm sorry to have to tell you this, Penny, but Dinah passed away five years ago

Fantana: I'm so sorry, Cole. Was it an illness?

Sore: **(Bitterly)** No. The medical examiner concluded it was an allergic reaction to something that she ate.

Fantana: Again – I'm so sorry. You've been through so much.

Sore: I've got my work, Penny. That keeps me steady enough.

Fantana: Tripp, Chess. I want you to get some help from the staff and search these grounds for human bones. You might want to start with the pigsty.

(Chess and Tripp exit as Self and Freddy enter. Self is carrying a heavy suitcase)

Self: **(With a long-suffering sigh)** Mister Frederick has arrived from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

(Freddy Moves swiftly to the sherry and starts to pour a glass for himself. Self exits with the suitcase)

Freddy: Hello all. Two questions: Have they read the will yet and what's for dinner?

Lady R: As if things couldn't get worse, Freddy's here.

Wendy: Hello, Uncle Freddy.

Freddy: **(About to drink)** Hello there. Wendykins.

Ralph: **(Joining Freddy)** No! Don't drink that.

Freddy: **(Bemused)** Whyever not, my dear Ralph?

Lady R: Yes. Whyever not?

Fantana: It's poisoned.

Freddy: **(Putting the glass down)** Goodness. Really?

Lady R: It's killed six pigs already. You might as well make it seven.

Fantana: The person that put poison in that bottle wanted Lady Rigby to die.

Sore: **(Indicating Millie)** And didn't much care who else it happened to kill.

(Tripp and Chess enter, each carrying some bones. Chess also has a wristwatch and a necklace)

Fantana: That was quick.

Tripp: We found these in the pigsty. The gamekeeper is gathering up the rest of them.

(Sore joins them, takes a bone from Tripp and examines it)

Sore: That's definitely part of a human femur – female I'd say.

Chess: And there's this necklace and wristwatch.

Millie: Can I see that necklace please?

(Chess gives her bones to Tripp and then shows the necklace to Millie)

Millie: This necklace is Daisy's. I've seen her wearing it.

Ralph: I'm pretty sure that's Herman's watch.

Fantana: Well, that settles it. Herman and Daisy were murdered.

Chess: The question is: by who...and why?

Tripp: That's two questions. And anyway, it's *by whom* not *who*. That's the correct word.

Chess: Oh, yeah? Says who?

Tripp: Says *whom*.

Chess: **(Irritated)** You can be very picky. You know that?

Tripp: You mean *punctilious*; I can be very punctilious.
(Clearly fuming, Chess squares up to Tripp. Tripp is visibly nervous)

Fantana: Chess. Can you get in touch with the pathologist and have the bodies taken.

Chess: Sure thing, boss. **(Aside to Tripp, seething)** If you correct me once more, clever clogs, they'll be picking up a third body from here.
(Chess exits as Fantana examines the unfaded section of wall at upstage left)

Fantana: This section of wall is unfaded. Did that room divider used to stand here?

Ralph: I've no idea. I hardly ever come in this room. Millie cleans the study. She might know.

Millie: I'm sorry. I don't remember.
(Deep in thought, Fantana now looks at the piece of embroidery on the wall. She runs her hand over its surface and then faces the audience)

Fantana: I now know who killed your husband, Lady Rigby. In fact, they're in this room right now.
(All except the detectives exchange surprised and suspicious looks)
(Lights down. Tabs close)

Scene 2 – Lord Rigby’s study at Marden Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. The two bodies have been removed. Ralph and Lady R sit on the couch, Freddy, glass of beer in hand, perches on the couch’s arm. Millie is still sat at the desk with Tripp in attendance. Wendy stands behind Freddy. Sore is at the table taking a sample of sherry from the glass with a pipet. All are looking towards Fantana who is standing next to the embroidery, the dart held in her hand for everyone to see)

Fantana: It was simple really. Someone had to make it seem as if Mary and Lord Rigby somehow murdered each other inside this locked room.

Freddy: Oh, I say; this is jolly exciting, isn’t it? It’s just like that foreign detective chap with the moustache. French, I think.

Wendy: You mean Hercule Poirot, Uncle Freddy.

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Freddy: No. Not him...

(Slight pause as Freddy tries to remember. Fantana approaches the couch)

Freddy: Clouseau! Inspector Clouseau. That’s the one.

Fantana: You see, Mary and His Lordship were killed by two different people.

Lady R: Who did this, Inspector. Who killed my Digby?

Fantana: That was Mary Hawes, the housekeeper.

Lady R: Mary?

Fantana: She’d already hidden herself in this room before His Lordship entered. She was behind this couch.

Wendy: How do you know that?

Fantana: Simple. At that particular time, with the door closed, it was the only place a person could conceal themselves in here and not be seen by His Lordship when he entered.

Freddy: Can’t argue with that.

Fantana: Give me a hand lifting this, Tripp.

(Fantana and Tripp lift up the room divider, pivoting it on its upstage edge so that it stands upright against the upstage wall. It is now covering the embroidery and leaving a narrow gap between itself and the wall)

Fantana: When Lord Rigby entered and locked himself in, she emerged from behind the sofa, carrying the gun which she'd taken from his desk drawer, shot him, placed the weapon in his hand and then positioned herself like so.

(Fantana slides behind the room divider into the narrow gap. Her back is now flat against the embroidery. Fantana speaks her next few lines from behind the room divider)

Fantana: She'd arranged with her co-conspirator to position herself here so that when the door was opened into the room by whoever was first on the scene, she'd be hidden from view.

Tripp: Oh, I see; then she could just slip out from behind the room divider and pretend she'd just entered the room to see what had happened.

Ralph: So, when Self entered, Mary was already in this room?

(Fantana emerges from behind the room divider)

Fantana: Yes and she was already dead – lying there on the floor, face down on top of the room divider.

Wendy: How though?

Fantana: **(Holds up the dart)** Unknown to Mary, her partner in murder had placed this dart in the embroidery here. The poisoned tip pointing straight out so that...

Tripp: ... **(Catching on)** she'd press her back against the dart and poison herself.

Fantana: Exactly. This screen provided her with the only place in the room where she could remain unseen by those entering after the gun shot.

(Fantana moves to upstage left and indicates the unfaded wall section)

Fantana: This is the usual position of the screen. Mary had moved it to its new position before she hid behind it.

Ralph: Why on earth would she do that?

Fantana: Simple. If she'd hidden behind the screen in this position **(Indicating the faded wall section)** she would have been seen by those entering the room.

Tripp: **(Catching on)** Because the door opens this way into the room it would block their view of the screen in its new position...

Wendy: And Mary could simply slip out and join the others here. Her fellow killer was clever and knew she'd have to reposition the room divider.

Sore: When she was poisoned, she just collapsed, taking the screen with her.

Ralph: The darts were kept with the blowpipe in the library.

Sore: The killer must've taken one from there and dipped it in cyanide.

Fantana: Precisely. That person is someone who has access to the rooms here.

Wendy: Mary was double-crossed though. That means there's another murderer in this house.

Lady R: But, why would she kill my husband? Mary wasn't mentioned in the will.
(Fantana moves to the desk, picks up the photograph and looks at it)

Fantana: We don't know that money was her motive. This photograph may tell us the real reason your husband was shot.
(Self and Chess enter. Chess is cleverly disguised as a maid. Self coughs for attention)

Lady R: What is it, Self?

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Self: Lunch is ready, Your Ladyship.

Freddy: About time. I'm famished.

Ralph: **(Standing)** Will you be joining us in the dining room, Inspector?

Fantana: Thank you, Lady Rigby, but we'll remain in here.

Lady R: Very well. Could you bring some sandwiches in here for the detectives, Self.

Self: Yes, Your Ladyship. Hannah; you can tell cook to arrange sandwiches and drinks for the detectives.

(All exit except for Fantana and Tripp)

Tripp: Chess is taking a heck of a long time making that telephone call, boss.

Fantana: **(Tapping her nose twice)** I've given her another assignment – a secret one.

Tripp: Intriguing.

(Slight pause)

Tripp: Do you think Self is our second killer? I mean, Self could've easily written that postcard and posted it to this address.

Fantana: I can see how you might think that. Self benefits generously from the will after all.

Tripp: You've ruled that out though?

Fantana: Yes. Ms Self slipped me a note earlier. Self has the same suspicions as myself and has agreed to help us – undercover, you might say.

Tripp: Undercover butler. What about Ralph? He and Wendy stand to inherit big time.

Fantana: They're both on my radar, Tripp, but to use His Lordship's words, a *shameful deception* is at the heart of these murders.

Tripp: And we can probably rule out Lady Rigby as a suspect. Someone tried to poison her.

Fantana: I wouldn't be in a hurry to rule anyone out just yet, Tripp.

(Self, Wilf, Carlos, Yvette, and Nicki enter and stand in a line. Nicki wears a chef's outfit complete with hat)

Self: I have summoned the rest of the staff for you, Inspector Fantana.

Fantana: Thank you, Ms Self.

Self: **(Winking conspiratorially at Fantana)** I have told the maid, *Hannah* that you'll interview her later.

Fantana: Oh, yes. Thanks.

Tripp: **(Spoken aside, puzzled)** Did Self just wink at you, boss?

Fantana: Yes. Ms Self is helping me with a little subterfuge.

Nicki: Ms Self said you wanted to ask us some questions.

Fantana: Take notes please, Tripp.

(Tripp takes notes in a small notebook throughout the interviews)

Fantana: So, you must be the new cook, Nicki.

Nicki: That's uncanny. I can't think how you figured that out. It's no wonder you're an inspector.

Fantana: **(Wearily)** Alright. Ha, ha. Where were you at nine this morning?

Nicki: If you must know, I was in the kitchen preparing lunch.

Fantana: Can anyone else confirm that?

Nicki: As a matter of fact, yes. Butler can. Butler was having a cup of tea there.

Fantana: **(Spoken to Self)** You said that you were in the pantry at nine.

Self: I was, Inspector. She's talking about Wilf Butler, the gamekeeper.

Wilf: That's me. I was having my morning cuppa.

Fantana: I see. And you're Carlos, His Lordship's driver?

Carlos: Si. I like to use the title chauffeur though.

Fantana: Where were you at nine?

Carlos: I was washing His Lordship's Bentley on the drive. Yvette can vouch for me. She waved to me from the stables.

Yvette: I'm Yvette. I'm lord Rigby's groom. I was on the phone at the time.

Fantana: Who were you speaking to?

Yvette: I was speaking to a vet.

Tripp: But, I thought *you* were Yvette.

Yvette: I am. I was talking to a *vet* - Doctor Moore. He's treating two of our horses for hoof mite.

Wilf: Now that I think about it, I was looking out of the kitchen window and I caught a glimpse of Cook on the drive.

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Tripp: Woah there! You just said that Cook was in the kitchen with you at nine.

Carlos: He means me. I'm Carlos Cook.

Nicki: Can we just get this over with? I've got a soufflé to watch.

Self: Mind your manners, Groom.

Tripp: **(Spoken to Self, uncertainly)** Groom? Isn't Yvette the groom?

Self: She is. This is Nicki Groom, our cook.

Fantana: Just out of curiosity, Yvette, what's *your* surname?

Yvette: Driver.

Fantana: Naturally.

Yvette: **(Spoken to Tripp, meaningfully)** That's *Miss* Driver. I'm not married.
(A slight pause as Tripp consults his notes)

Tripp: Wait a moment. Let's see if I've got this right. **(Consulting his notes)** Miss Yvette Driver, the groom, was on the telephone to a vet and waving to the driver, Carlos Cook while the cook, Nicki Groom, was in the kitchen with the gamekeeper, Buttler, and the butler, Self, was in the pantry.

Self: Indeed, Sergeant.

Tripp: Phew!

Fantana: Well, I think we've got quite enough there. You all seem to be able to conveniently alibi each other in one way or another. They're free to go, Self.
(Self indicates that the staff may leave. Self, Carlos, Yvette, and Nicki exit while Wilf is last to head for the exit but turns back and approaches Fantana)

Wilf: Excuse me, Inspector.

Fantana: Yes?

Wilf: I didn't want to say this in front of Ms Self and the others. I did see something a bit strange just before nine.

Tripp: What did you see, Wilf?

Wilf: It was about half past eight, just after Her Ladyship and Miss Wendy headed off up the lane to St. Mary's. I was off to the woods and just happened to look in at the library window as I was passing. I saw Mister Ralph and Mister Frederick having a bit of a row, you might say.

Tripp: Are you sure it was Mister Frederick?

Wilf: Oh, yes. Mister Ralph gave Mister Frederick a right old rollicking and Mister Frederick stormed out.

Tripp: Did you happen to see anyone else about at that time?

Wilf: Not then. I did see Miss Wendy out on the tennis court much earlier, at about seven-thirty. She was working on her strokes with the tennis ball machine.

Fantana: Thank you, Wilf. That might prove useful.

Wilf: Always happy to help the law, Inspector.

(Wilf exits)

Tripp: So, Freddy was already here at nine and Ralph knew it.

Fantana: I wonder what they're hiding.

(Carlos re-enters and approaches Fantana)

Tripp: Oh, hello again, Carlos. Did you forget to tell us something?

Carlos: Si. I just think you police should know something about that evil lying witch you've just interviewed.

Fantana: Who?

Tripp: I'm talking about the so-called cook, Nicki. Her lies are even worse than her food. She spies on everyone here and reports back to Ms Self.

Tripp: Look; we're only interested in anything that's relevant to this case.

Carlos: What about a different case? An unsolved murder?

Fantana: An unsolved murder?

Carlos: Yes. Nicki has been deeply in love with Doctor Sore for years. She cooked the meal right here the night that the doctor's wife died.

Tripp: Are you suggesting that Nicki killed the doctor's wife, Dinah?

Carlos: They said it couldn't have been food poisoning because all the guests ate the same food. Now, imagine if Nicki put something into one of the servings?

Fantana: I don't see how that would be possible, Carlos. Only the person that waited at the table could do that, surely.

Carlos: They might have been in on it together.

Tripp: Who?

Carlos: Nicki and Mary Hawes. Mary waited at the table that night.

Fantana: Who else was at the table that night?

Carlos: Let me see. Well, there was His Lordship, Her ladyships, Miss Wendy, Mister Ralph, Missus Sore of course, and the parish dean.

Tripp: Not Doctor Sore?

Carlos: No. He was on call that night and anyway, Missus Sore was Her Ladyship's best pal so she often came to dinner without her husband. I have to go now, Inspector. I have duties and that witch will be keeping an eye on me.

(Carlos exits)

Fantana: Another murder?

Tripp: Mary Hawes served the food. What would *she* gain by killing the doctor's wife?

(Chess, still disguised as Hannah the maid, enters at upstage centre with a tray of sandwiches. She places them on the desk. Tripp does not recognise her)

Chess: **(Disguising her voice)** Your sandwiches, Inspector.

Fantana: Thank you Hannah.

Chess: There's beef and pickle and ham with mustard.

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(Chess gives a thumbs up to Fantana and pulls a face at Tripp who is facing away from her and examining the sandwiches. She then exits. SFX. Shattering glass. We hear screams from offstage)

Tripp: What was that?

(Ralph enters at upstage centre in a rush and we hear a commotion from offstage)

Ralph: Someone's tried to shoot my aunt.

Fantana: Who is it? Are they still armed?

Ralph: I don't know. The shot was fired from outside the dining room. From the garden I think.

Tripp: I'll see if I can catch them.

(Lady R, Wendy, Freddy, and Sore enter. Tripp exits in a hurry. Sore has an arm around Lady R who has a wine stain on her dress and is carrying the broken stem of a wine glass. Sore leads Lady R to the couch and sits with her as Self enters at upstage centre)

Freddy: Never a dull moment around here, hey?

Wendy: Are you alright, Auntie?

Lady R: **(Brushing glass from her dress)**Yes, Wendy dearest; I'm quite unharmed.

(Lady R hands the broken glass stem to Self who then exits with it)

Fantana: How do you know that Her Ladyship was the target?

Sore: The bullet narrowly missed her.

Wendy: It smashed her wine glass.

Fantana: That's twice now that someone's tried to kill you, Lady Rigby. Everyone is to remain in this room and keep well away from the windows.

(SFX Shotgun blast from offstage. Fantana exits swiftly)

Freddy: Goodness! It's all kicking off, isn't it? I think we could all do with a drink, don't you, Ellie?

Lady R: Oh, do shut up, Freddy, you idiot.

(Freddy mimes zipping his mouth closed)

Lady R: And do not *ever* call me Ellie.

(Lights down. Tabs close)

Scene 3 – Lord Rigby’s study at Marden Manor

(Tabs open. Lights up. Sore and Lady R sit on the couch. Wendy sits on the footstool. Ralph is looking anxiously through the window and Freddy samples a sandwich at the desk)

Ralph: Goodness. It’s Wilf. He’s got his shotgun.

(SFX. Shotgun blast. Everyone jumps. Wendy joins Ralph at the window)

Wendy: What’s happening?

Ralph: He seems to be taking pot shots at someone. Oh, wait; Inspector Fantana and the sergeant are restraining him. They’re coming in.

(Self, Tripp, Wilf, and Fantana who is carrying the shotgun, enter. Fantana hands the gun to Self who exits with it)

Wilf: I was only trying to scare him off.

Fantana: Keep him in here with the others, Tripp. I’m going to check out the dining room.

(Fantana exits)

Tripp: What did the intruder look like, Wilf?

(Tripp takes out his notebook and takes notes)

Wilf: Well, I didn’t get a look at his face. He was running away with his back to me.

Wendy: I suppose he’d have to, wouldn’t he?

Tripp: What do you mean, Wendy?

Wendy: He’d have to have his back to you otherwise he’d be running *towards* you.

(All nod in agreement. Chess, still disguised as Hannah, enters at upstage centre with a coffee pot and six cups on a tray. She places it on the desk, pours coffee into two cups and takes them to Lady R and Sore who accept them. She pours four more and offers one to Freddy who waves her away. She takes two to Wendy and Ralph who accept them. She then stands by the door. Noone looks at her during this sequence)

Tripp: How tall would you say he was?

Wilf: About middle height, I’d guess.

Tripp: **(Speaking as he’s writing)** Middle height. Was he armed?

Wilf: He was carrying a rifle.

Tripp: A rifle. How old would you say?

Wilf: About sixty years old.

Tripp: **(Writing)** In his sixties.

Wilf: Oh, no; I meant the rifle.
Tripp: The rifle?
Wilf: The rifle looked like it was about sixty years old. I had one like that when I was in the army.

(Fantana enters at upstage centre, carrying a bullet)

Fantana: I found this rifle bullet embedded in the dining room table.
Sore: I can see I'm going to have to keep a close eye on you from now on, Eleanor.
Lady R: **(Warmly)** Thank you, Cole.

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Fantana: I think it's high time we had large dose of the truth around here.
Ralph: What do you mean?
Fantana: I know why your housekeeper, Mary Hawes, shot Lord Rigby.
Lady R: Why?
Fantana: And I know, for a fact, that someone in this room also knows the reason.
Wendy: Who?
Fantana: That person is the second killer. They're the one who poisoned Mary.
Chess: **(Waves to them all)** Yoo hoo!
(All except Fantana turn to look at Chess)
Tripp: **(Surprised)** Chess. I wondered where you'd gone. That costume really suits you.
Chess: Thanks.
Ralph: Detective Board. Why are you dressed as a maid?
Chess: Well, Inspector Fantana was conducting an experiment.
Fantana: Your murdered housekeeper, Mary Hawes was, in reality, Marjorie Shawe, Toby's wife. Hawes is an anagram of Shawe.
(A surprised reaction from all except Fantana and Chess. Self enters)
Lady R: No. Surely not. That can't be. I've known Marjorie for years.
Ralph: Nonsense!
Chess: **(Spoken to Lady R)** Marjorie wanted revenge for Digby abandoning her husband in the jungle all those years ago.

Fantana: She posed as a housekeeper and landed a job here.

Chess: And because you posh folk never really bother looking at the staff – I mean actually clocking their faces – she was able to hide in plain sight.

Fantana: To prove that, Chess has been posing as Hannah the maid and nobody here recognised her as the detective constable they'd already met.

Chess: In all fairness, Wilf here has never seen me as a police officer and DS Hazzard is so dozy he can barely recognise himself in a shaving mirror.

Tripp: Charming. Thanks a lot.

Chess: You're welcome.

Wilf: I haven't got the foggiest what's happening here.

Freddy: **(With a mouth full of sandwich)** Nor me.

Fantana: Toby wasn't lost in the jungle was he, Your Ladyship?

Lady R: No. I might as well tell you the truth. My husband's shameful secret was that he never did discover the ancient lost city of Exslaxx.

Fantana: Lord Rigby and Herman had to get rid of Toby, didn't they?

Lady R: I fear so. Herman owned a large construction firm and after years of fruitlessly searching, he convinced Digby to let him build an ancient city deep in the jungle.

Chess: Goodness. So, the ancient city wasn't ancient after all.

Lady R: The ruined city was built, complete with crumbling stonework and a fake vine-clad palace. Digby and Herman became world famous.

Wendy: And a whole lot wealthier too.

Lady R: When Toby found out what they had planned, he said he couldn't go along with such a dishonest scheme. Herman slipped a poisonous snake into his sleeping bag and Toby was no longer a problem.

Chess: So, it's my guess that your husband disposed of Herman.

Lady R: Herman became a liability to my husband. He knew too much and was blackmailing him. Daisy was what you'd call collateral damage. Digby poisoned them both and left them for the pigs to eat.

Chess: Poor piggies.

Fantana: Whoever killed Marjorie knew that Lord Rigby was a poisoner and soon got their hands on the cyanide.

Chess: Someone here worked alongside Marjorie to kill Lord Rigby and, in doing so, removed an obstacle that stood between themselves and a great deal of money.

Sore: And Eleanor was the second obstacle, I suppose.

(All look at Ralph and then at Wendy)

Ralph: No. You can't seriously think we had anything to do with this.

Tripp: You and Wendy had the most to gain if both His Lordship and Lady Rigby died.

Sore: So, Marjorie's partner in crime poisoned her to shut her up?

(Fantana holds the bullet up for all to see)

Fantana: Indeed. The attempted shooting of Lady Rigby was faked. There was no shooter in the garden and this used bullet was placed in a hole that had already been bored in the table.

Wendy: So, someone at the dining table set all that up?

Chess: Yes. The killer faked the shooting attempt on her life to give themselves a rock solid alibi...

Tripp: ...And rule them out as the one who tried to poison Her Ladyship earlier?

Chess: You're catching on, Tripp.

Ralph: But how? I saw the window smash and the glass shatter.

Fantana: Earlier in the day, one of you had aimed the tennis ball machine at the dining room window and loaded it with a metal ball bearing instead of a tennis ball.

(Tripp looks at Wendy who seems uncomfortable. Fantana holds up an elastic band)

Chess: The same person had earlier embedded the bullet in the table and, when the ball bearing was fired at the window, they used that folded elastic band at close range to fire a second ball bearing at the wine glass.

Sore: **(Catching on)** We were all looking at the smashed window, so we wouldn't see that.

Fantana: That's right, Cole. Even now, as I speak, one of you has two ball bearings in their pocket. The second one was retrieved from the floor after it was launched through the window.

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Tripp: Who operated the tennis ball machine, boss?

Fantana: That was you, Wilf.

Wilf: What?

Tripp: Oh, yes. That makes sense. He must've been working with the killer. I mean to say, we've only got Wilf's word that Freddy and Ralph were in the library and that Wendy was on the tennis court in the morning.

Wilf: I've done nothing.

Chess: You also lied about the intruder running away after the shooting.

Lady R: Who is he working with, Inspector Fantana? Who's trying to kill me?

Fantana: Noone's trying to kill you.

Ralph: But you said...

Fantana: **(Cutting him off)** ...Both the sherry poisoning and the ball bearing incidents were designed to point the finger at Ralph or Wendy. You were never meant to die, Lady Rigby.

Tripp: But, what about poor Millie?

Fantana: Millie drank some sherry before our killer had the chance to make a show of sniffing the glass and stopping Lady Rigby from drinking it.

Tripp: Surely Ralph and Wendy are the two who stood to gain the most from Lord and Lady Rigby's deaths.

Fantana: But Wilf was working with a killer that wanted you very much alive, Your Ladyship.

Chess: A killer that used Marjorie's desire for revenge to remove the only obstacle between him and the woman he loves.

Fantana: Somebody here is in possession of two ball bearings. Would you please empty your pockets, Doctor Sore.

(All look at Sore who, realising the game is up, removes a small spray bottle from his pocket, stands up, grabs Chess and points the spray bottle at her face. Self exits without being seen)

Sore: Now, everyone remain calm. This is filled with cyanide and I'll use it if I have to.

Lady R: Cole! Surely not.

(Self enters at upstage centre carrying the shotgun. Fantana and Wilf take pistols from their pockets. Fantana points hers at Sore and Wilf points his at Fantana. Self points the shotgun at Wilf)

Sore: I *will* do it. Have you the slightest idea – any of you – what it's like to see the woman you love married to a murdering fraudster, to watch her light fade in the darkness of his evil shadow?

Wendy: To be honest, Cole, it's extremely unlikely that any of us would know how that felt.

Tripp: How did you figure out it was Doctor Sore, boss?

Fantana: It was the bottle of ipecac he just happened to have in his bag when Millie was poisoned?

Chess: Ipecac?

Fantana: It's a vomit inducing agent. It's not something a doctor would carry around with them normally.

Tripp: He must've planned to use it to save Lady Rigby.

Sore: Nobody move a muscle or I'll spray this in her face.

Tripp: Well, Chess will have to move, wont she?

Sore: What?

Chess: Otherwise you'd have to pick me up and walk out with me, wouldn't you?

Tripp: Alright. Supposing that one of us does move and you spray Chess like you threatened; what happens then?

Sore: What are you talking about?

Tripp: I mean, are you then going to chase us all around the room trying to spray us like a bunch of flies?

Chess: *Swarm*, Tripp. It's a swarm of flies.

Tripp: You'd be shot dead in seconds. Think about it.

(Nicki enters at upstage centre. She's holding a gun and points it at Tripp)

Nicki: Quick! I've got a car running outside, Cole. We can take her with us as our hostage.

Chess: I'm warning you; I get horribly car sick when I'm a passenger.

Sore: Nicki. What are you doing?

Nicki: You and me, Cole. We can go away together; you know, just change our names and start a new life – a perfect life.

Sore: What are you talking about?

Chess: I'll end up vomiting everywhere.

Nicki: I love you, Cole and you love me and that's all that matters.

Sore: That's absurd. You're delusional.

Nicki: You do love me. We kissed. That means everything.

Sore: It was Christmas and we were under the mistletoe. That's all it was.

Chess: **(Spoken to herself)** I could drive, I suppose. That might work.

Niki: You know you love me, Cole. This note proves it.

(Nicki takes a small note from her pocket, waves it briefly)

Sore: What note?

Nicki: You slipped this to Mary after Christmas dinner and asked her to give it to me.
(Nicki reads the note aloud)

Nicki: *Please tell Nicki that I love her.*
(Slight pause as Nicki closes her eyes in a reverie and clutches the note to her chest)

Sore: Turn it over Nicki. Look on the other side. There's more writing.
(Nicki turns the note over and reads aloud)

Nicki: *Peach Melba. It's so delicious. (Reading both sides) Please tell Nicki that I love her Peach Melba. It's so delicious. No! That's not right. You must love me, Cole; you must.*
(Nicki approaches Sore and Chess, pointing the gun at Sore who looks at Lady R. Nicki follows his gaze)

Nicki: Her! No! Not her. It can't be her.

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(Nicki aims to shoot Lady R as, simultaneously, Chess breaks free from the distracted Sore and knocks the gun from Nicki's hand and we hear SFX. Gunshot. Lady R picks the gun up and points it at Nicki who collapses sobbing)

Fantana: Give that to me, Cole. Hasn't there been enough death?
(A pause of 3 - 4 seconds as Sore agonises briefly over his options)

Lady R: You killed my husband, Cole.
(Lady R now points the gun at Sore and, for 3 seconds seems to be about to shoot before handing the gun to Fantana who pockets it)

Sore: I waited, Eleanor. I prayed for you to leave him. What have I done?
(Sore starts to sob, drops the spray bottle, releases Chess and slumps onto the couch. Tripp slips behind the couch and handcuffs Sore as Fantana pockets her gun and retrieves the spray. Self takes the gun from Wilf, handcuffs him, and places the gun on the table at upstage left. Self guards Wilf)

Freddy: Phew! That was hairy stuff. I definitely think it's time for a strong drink or two.
(Fantana handcuffs the sobbing Nicki)

Lady R: For once I'm inclined to agree with you, Freddy.

Fantana: Toby, Herman, Daisy, Lord Rigby, and Marjorie. Five murders and four murderers.

Tripp: But only one killer for us to arrest.

Fantana: The poisoned dart in the embroidery was very clever of you Doctor Sore.

Tripp: You managed to kill off your accomplice without even being in the building at the time.

Chess: You're going to spend the rest of your life behind bars, Cole.

(Millie moves to the table at upstage left, picks up the gun and points it at Sore)

Millie: No he's not. I'm going to kill him.

(There are shocked, surprised, and puzzled reactions from all)

Tripp: Millie. What are you doing?

Millie: That rat killed my mother.

Fantana: You're Marjorie's daughter, aren't you?

Millie: **(Bitterly)** Yes. I never even got to meet my father. Lord Rigby and Herman saw to that.

Fantana: **(Indicates the photograph)** That's why Marjorie is sitting in that photograph. She was heavily pregnant with you.

Lady R: **(Astounded)** You're little Agatha.

Millie: Yes. I got the job here at the same time as mother got hers. We both wanted to do away with that worthless piece of filth.

(Fantana opens a hand to reveal six bullets)

Fantana: It's no use, Millie. I emptied the pistol.

Tripp: Give it to me, Millie. He'll go to prison for life.

(Millie's shoulders slump as she gives the gun to Tripp. He puts his arm around her and guides her to the chair at the desk)

Chess: **(Chiding, playfully)** I'll tell Janine.

Tripp: Knock it off, Chess.

Chess: **(Disapprovingly)** Tut, tut.

(Tripp points the gun playfully at the window and is about to fire)

Tripp: That was quick thinking, boss – emptying the gun.

Fantana: No! Tripp. Don't!

(SFX. gunshot and, simultaneously, SFX. shattering glass. All jump or duck and Tripp drops the gun as if it's roasting hot)

Self: (Glumly) That's another window to replace.

Tripp: (Horrified) I thought it was empty.

Fantana: I was bluffing, Tripp. These bullets are from my own gun.

(Fantana picks up the gun)

Chess: (Exasperated) This...*this* is why you keep failing your gun certificate test.

(Slight pause as Tripp calms himself)

Tripp: What about the Doctor Sore's wife, boss? Who poisoned her?

Fantana: Nobody poisoned Dinah. I checked the records. It turned out to be a heart attack. Carlos hates Nicki and he was just trying to get her into trouble.

Tripp: Another red herring.

Fantana: Exactly. Tripp and Chess. Take these three down to the station.

(Tripp and Chess start to lead Wilf, Nicki, and Sore towards the exit. Their next eight lines are spoken on stage)

Chess: Right you are, boss. (Spoken to Tripp) I'm driving this time.

Tripp: Why do you get to drive? You drive like a maniac.

Chess: I want to get there before closing time, slowcoach.

Tripp: We're taking them to the nick. It doesn't have a closing time.

Chess: I'm talking about the pub, you numpty. We'll drop these three clowns off and hit The Crown for a few beers.

Tripp: Oh, I see. Good idea.

Chess: You're buying.

(Tripp and Chess exit and we hear the remainder of their conversation from offstage. Fantana smiles and shakes her head in despair)

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Tripp: Why me?

Chess: You get paid more than me.

Tripp: Fair enough.

Chess: Goodness knows why.

Lady R: I suppose I'll be needed for questioning now, Inspector Fantana.

Fantana: You and Millie will each be charged as an accessory after the fact, but, for the time being, you can both remain here.

Lady R: Thank you.

Millie: **(In tears)** I'm sorry. We went too far.
(Lady R approaches Millie)

Lady R: No, Millie. *I'm* sorry. You wouldn't have gone through all this horror if I'd just told the truth. You're part of our family now. We'll look after you.
(Wendy joins Lady R and Millie)

Wendy: You can be my sister. I've always wanted a little sister.
(Millie smiles happily and nods. Fantana picks up the pistol, pockets it, moves to the window and gazes out at the garden)

Lady R: Self.

Self: Yes, Your Ladyship?

Lady R: Drinks for everyone, I think.

Self: Yes, Your Ladyship. What will it be?

Freddy: Just bring the trolley. A bottle of everything you've got on it. Not the sherry though.
(Lady R fixes Freddy with a cold stare then a gentle smile appears on her face. She nods at Self who bows and exits)

Lady R: Will you join us, Inspector Fantana?
(Fantana looks at her wristwatch)

Fantana: I don't see why not. I'm off duty. I'll chance a beer.

Wendy: Oh, goody. Is it alright if Uncle Freddy stays here for a bit, Auntie? We could have a game of doubles with you and Ralph.

Freddy: What do you say?

Lady R: **(Spoken to Freddy)** I don't see why not, you sad old waster. You can stick around for a while.

Freddy: Jolly good. That's very sporting of you, Ellie.
(Lady R stands and approaches Freddy)

Lady R: Just one thing, Freddy dear.

Freddy: Yes, Ellie?

Lady R: (Measured tone) If you call me Ellie one more time, I'll stick my arm down your scrawny throat, rip out your spine and strangle you with it. Understand?

(Freddy mouths the word 'sorry' then mimes zipping his mouth closed. Lights down. Tabs close. The end)