

Abby, Martha, Mortimer

MARTHA. [*Crossing D. L.*] Oh, yes!

ABBY. And I'll open a bottle of wine.

MARTHA. [*As she exits to kitchen.*] Oh, and to think it happened in this room!

MORTIMER. [*Has finished looking through papers, is gazing around room.*] Now where could I have put that?

ABBY. Well, with your fiancée sitting beside you tonight, I do hope the play will be something you can enjoy for once. It may be something romantic. What's the name of it?

MORTIMER. "Murder Will Out."

ABBY. Oh dear! [*She disappears into kitchen as MORTIMER goes on talking.*]

MORTIMER. When the curtain goes up the first thing you'll see will be a dead body. [*He lifts window-seat and sees one. Not believing it, he drops window-seat again and starts downstage. He suddenly stops with a "take," then goes back, throws window-seat open and stares in. He goes slightly mad for a moment. He backs away, then hears ABBY humming on her way into the room. He drops window-seat again and holds it down, staring around the room. ABBY enters carrying a silencer and tablecloth which she puts on armchair, then picks up bundle of papers and returns them to drawer in sideboard. MORTIMER speaks in a somewhat strained voice.*] Aunt Abby!

ABBY. [*At sideboard.*] Yes, dear?

MORTIMER. You were going to make plans for Teddy to go to that . . . sanitarium—Happy Dale —

ABBY. [*Bringing legal papers from sideboard to MORTIMER.*] Yes, dear, it's all arranged. Dr. Harper was here today and brought the papers for Teddy to sign. Here they are.

[*He takes them from her.*]

MORTIMER. He's got to sign them right away.

ABBY. [*Arranging silencer on table. MARTHA enters from kitchen door with table silver and plates on a tray. She sets tray on sideboard. Goes to table R.*] That's what Dr. Harper thinks. Then there won't be any legal difficulties after we pass on.

MORTIMER. He's got to sign them this minute! He's down in the cellar—get him up here right away.

MARTHA. [*Unfolding tablecloth. She's above table on R.*] There's no such hurry as that.

ABBY. No. When Teddy starts working on the canal you can't get his mind on anything else.

MORTIMER. Teddy's got to go to Happy Dale now—tonight.

MARTHA. Oh, no, dear, that's not until after we're gone.

MORTIMER. Right away, I tell you!—right away!

ABBY. [*Turning to MORTIMER.*] Why, Mortimer, how can you say such a thing? Why, as long as we live we'll never be separated from Teddy.

MORTIMER. [*Trying to be calm.*] Listen, darlings, I'm frightfully sorry, but I've got some shocking news for you. [*The AUNTS stop work and look at him with some interest.*] Now we've all got to try and keep our heads. You know we've sort of humored Teddy because we thought he was harmless.

MARTHA. Why he *is* harmless!

MORTIMER. He *was* harmless. That's why he has to go to Happy Dale. Why he has to be confined.

ABBY. [*Stepping to MORTIMER.*] Mortimer, why have you suddenly turned against Teddy?—your own brother?

MORTIMER. You've got to know sometime. It might as well be now, Teddy's—killed a man!

MARTHA. Nonsense, dear.

[*MORTIMER rises and points to window-seat.*]

MORTIMER. There's a body in the window-seat!

ABBY. Yes, dear, we know.

[*MORTIMER "takes" as ABBY and MARTHA busy themselves again at table.*]

MORTIMER. You *know*?

MARTHA. Of course, dear, but it has nothing to do with Teddy. [*Gets tray from sideboard—arranges silver and plates on table: 3 places, U. L. and R.*]

ABBY. Now, Mortimer, just forget about it—forget you ever saw the gentleman.

MORTIMER. *Forget?*

ABBY. We never dreamed you'd peek.

MORTIMER. But who is he?

ABBY. His name's Hoskins—Adam Hoskins. That's really all I know about him—except that he's a Methodist.

MORTIMER. That's all you know about him? Well, what's he doing here? What happened to him?

MARTHA. He died.

MORTIMER. Aunt Martha, men don't just get into window-seats and die.

ABBY. [*Silly boy.*] No, he died first.

MORTIMER. Well, how?

ABBY. Oh, Mortimer, don't be so inquisitive. The gentleman died because he drank some wine with poison in it.

MORTIMER. How did the poison get in the wine?

MARTHA. Well, we put it in wine because it's less noticeable—when it's in tea it has a distinct odor.

MORTIMER. *You* put it in the wine?

ABBY. Yes. And I put Mr. Hoskins in the window-seat because Dr. Harper was coming.

MORTIMER. So you knew what you'd done! You didn't want Dr. Harper to see the body!

ABBY. Well, not at tea—that wouldn't have been very nice. Now, Mortimer, you know the whole thing, just forget about it. I do think Martha and I have the right to our own little secrets. [*She crosses to sideboard to get two goblets from L. cupboard as MARTHA comes to table from sideboard with salt dish and pepper shaker.*]

MARTHA. And don't you tell Elaine! [*She gets 3d goblet from sideboard, then turns to ABBY who takes tray from sideboard.*] Oh, Abby, while I was out I dropped in on Mrs. Schultz. She's much better but she would like us to take Junior to the movies again.

ABBY. Well, we must do that tomorrow or next day.

MARTHA. Yes, but this time we'll go where we want to go. [*She starts for kitchen door. ABBY follows.*] Junior's not going to drag me into another one of those scary pictures. [*They exit into kitchen as MORTIMER wheels around and looks after them. ABBY shuts door.*]

MORTIMER. [*Dazed, looks around the room. His eyes come to rest on phone on desk; he crosses to it and dials a number. Into phone.*] City desk! [*There is a pause.*] Hello, Al. Do you know who this is? [*Pause.*] That's right. Say, Al, when I left the office, I told you where I was going, remember?—Well, where did I say? [*Pause.*] Uh-huh. Well, it would take me about half an hour to get to Brooklyn. What time have you got? [*He looks at his watch.*] That's right. I must be here. [*He hangs up, sits for a moment, then suddenly leaps off stool toward kitchen.*] Aunt Abby! Aunt