

T H E I N T E R C O M

A Play in Two Parts

by

MAURICE ROWDON

C H A R A C T E R S

ARTHUR CUTLASS

PEGGY CUTLASS his wife

PAMELA their daughter

NORMAN PILLINGER Pamela's husband

MARTIN FYFFE

S C E N E

ARTHUR CUTLASS's home in the north of England. The house has been fitted with an intercom apparatus, the controls of which are concealed in a chest. This chest is the only feature of the set.

O N E

1.

NORMAN PILLINGER, sitting on the chest. ANIMAL SQUEAKS AND SQUEALS are heard OVER. He jumps nervously, looks at the chest under him.

PAMELA CUTLASS, his wife, appears.

NORMAN: God above, I thought my rats were loose--- crawling up my trousers!

She gazes at him implacably.

PAMELA: Weren't we supposed to talk?

NORMAN: I am talking! It was like a rat's coetal cry (still looking at the chest). I lost my job by the way.

PAMELA: You were out all night.

NORMAN: That's why. Tracking down if it was true. Somebody tipped me off last night.

PAMELA: Thank God then! -I thought you were with her---

NORMAN: How much is there left, for the month?

PAMELA: An overdraft. If we had to pay rent I don't know where we'd be.

NORMAN: They're not in are they?

PAMELA: No.

NORMAN: Was it her idea, rigging up microphones all over the place? (Lifting the chest lid) Did you see these controls?

A noise, off.

NORMAN: I can't face them!

PAMELA: No, leave me to do the dirty work!

NORMAN: Was it the kids?

PAMELA: Probably.

NORMAN: Perhaps that rat's squeal was the kids too. I shouldn't stay up all night. I wish I could be like that Martin Fyffe, so solid, he looks as if he's wheeling his shoulders in front of him all the time.

PAMELA: Oh, stop bringing in Martin Fyffe all the time! If you admire, be like him.

NORMAN: A time-server?

PAMELA: Well, why don't you serve time?

Another squeal, OVER.

NORMAN: There, you heard it.

PAMELA: It's the children. There's a microphone in the nurse's nursery.

NORMAN: She was fired too, you'll be glad to hear.

PAMELA: Your girlfriend?

NORMAN: Who else? They gave her a reference, not me. They admitted I was the most brilliant chap they'd ever had in the place but the director didn't even shake me by the hand. (Screaming at her) Well, do something! ~~Er~~gnor something! Aren't you a normal wife?

PAMELA (also screaming) . Wife---to you? When you spend two months screwing a lab assistant?

NORMAN: I get that a hundred times a day. I told you before, it's just gone dead on me. It does on everybody. After ten years of marriage.

PAMELA: It's because you've gone dead, not the marriage.

NORMAN: I suppose so.

Quiet again.

PAMELA: And I have to keep the children alive.

NORMAN: Yes, because I can't.

PAMELA: But they must have given you a month's notice---it said that on the contract surely?

NORMAN: I never had a contract.

PAMELA: You told me you signed one!

NORMAN: Of course I did---that was propaganda for your mum. It worked too. She coughed up a washing machine and a trip to Majorca. (Remembering) That was an awful trip.

PAMELA: Because we were alone.

NORMAN: That's right. Do you know, they wouldn't even give me back my rats? I contributed a dozen when I took the job. I'm particularly sorry to have lost Murphy and Mrs Gorsmby Taylor, or Hilda as she sometimes let me call her. But then I could hardly bring them home---Murphy has nancer of the tongue and Hilda's womb is several yards from her, though technically still her own of course.

PAMELA: That's a horrible thing you do every day---torture animals for science! 'Science'!

NORMAN: Oh, they're both eating well. Murphy might even have a new tongue by the end of the week.

PAMELA: You're so funny aren't you?

PEGGY CUTLASS calls, off:  
Pamela, are you there?

NORMAN (jumping up) Oh Christ!

PEGGY CUTLASS enters as he leaves.

PEGGY (to PAMELA) Well, how do you like my new invention?

PAMELA (at the chest) This?

PEGGY (opening it) Look, all the rooms are connected up by intercom. These are the controls--- off and relay and receive, and a master-switch for relay and receive together. No more shouting from room to room. When the children can't sleep, or Barry gets his nasty cough, we hear every sigh. (As PAMELA stands doubtful) You'll get used to it in time, like we do to all new advances. We met such a marvellous man by the way. He paints pictures that move, isn't it marvellous? The paint actually moves before your eyes. No one knows how he does it. He wanted our doorknobs in the shape of hands so you shook hands with the door every time you came in, such a friendly idea. Arthur's thinking about it. He has such nice teeth too. And a wife.

PAMELA: Not that couple who make fake amphonæe?

PEGGY (stopping) You said you smelt camphor?

PAMELA: No I---

PEGGY: It's the fresh paint. It sweats and bleeds and weeps and dessicates and shrivels according to the weather---

PAMELA: What does?

PEGGY: The picture. We bought it.

PAMELA: How horrible!

PEGGY: Must the new always be horrible?

A child cries, OVER.

PAMELA: It's Barry!

ARTHUR's voice follows this, after  
some disconnected noises: Peggy,  
are you upstairs?

PEGGY: It's your father. (At the intercom)  
Hullo Arthur? Doesn't it work marvellous-  
ly? Come upstairs at once. You've  
woken the children.

ARTHUR (VO) No I haven't. I tripped over a wire.

PEGGY: You see, he'd never have found me otherwise.  
Go down and feed the children. I made a  
grapefruit squash for Barry and a grated  
apple for---anyway, you'll see. Ask  
Nancy.

PAMELA: Nancy's been wearing my bracelet again.  
I found it in her room.

PEGGY: Oh well I'm sure she didn't mean it.  
(packing her off) Anyway Pam do be nice  
to her, you know how hard they are to get.

PAMELA leaves. The vague noise  
of CHILDREN drifts OVER. PEGGY  
switches the apparatus off care-  
fully

ARTHUR CUTLASS appears.

ARTHUR: What's the matter now?

PEGGY: It couldn't be worse.

ARTHUR: It never can be! Every time I come in a  
room it seems to touch something ghastly.  
Well, keep this one away from me---

PEGGY: Norman---

ARTHUR: I don't want to hear! And where's all the  
furniture gone to?

PEGGY: Don't you remember anything? We arranged  
it all a week ago!

ARTHUR: I try to forget (sitting on the chest).

PEGGY: Don't do that! Stand up!

ARTHUR (springing up) What the hell's the matter?

PEGGY: The chest. You know you go through every-

ARTHUR: God knows where our guests are going to sit when Dan Sutton comes over and expects a big reception. Then there's that picture dripping all over the place downstairs, I wouldn't mind if it just moved but it drips.

PEGGY: It takes time and patience to cut through the crust of the nineteenth century. We aren't kings and queens any more so why should we sit on thrones?

ARTHUR: Oh do shut up. I'll never forget that lavatory pan spraying itself with eau de cologne every time you went. That got a bit expensive didn't it? And I love the way the bedroom windows open and close all night according to the temperature, except that the thermostat's gone wrong and they won't close any more! It cost me seventy-five quid to fix it last month, now they say they'll have to take the windows out for a bit, that'll be cosy!

PEGGY: She's been crying her eyes out.

ARTHUR: Who has?

PEGGY: Your daughter.

ARTHUR: Has he gone off with that other woman again?

PEGGY: No. He's walked out of his job. I heard it over the intercom. Probably he let all the rats loose or something.

ARTHUR: Let them loose? Good God, what's he going to get up to next?

PEGGY (showing him) And these hospital accounts have arrived.

ARTHUR (taking them) What about it?

PEGGY: Well, can't you see Gynaecological Department written there?

ARTHUR: What's wrong with that?

PEGGY: It's for Pamela. She's been going once a week. It must be a baby. I'll get her on the intercom.

She goes to the chest with pleasure  
and lifts the lid, then gets to work  
on the controls

on the controls. She buzzes one of the rooms.

NANCY (VO) Yes mum?

PEGGY: Don't call me mum and tell my daughter I'd to speak to her.

NANCY (VO) Your mum wants to speak to you mum. Here she is mum!

PEGGY: Darling your father would like to see you.

PAMELA (VO) I'll be right up.

PEGGY: Give me Nancy again.

PAMELA (VO) Here she is.

NANCY (VO) Yes mum?

PEGGY: If you took my daughter's bracelet to try on this morning put it back.

NANCY (VO) I didn't.

PEGGY: I'm not saying you did. Anyway, put it back. And I don't know why you have to call me mum, it isn't the nineteenth century. I'll talk to Barry.

NANCY (VO) He's on his pot mum.

PEGGY: Oh, I'm especially glad about that, after the trouble he had last night.

NANCY (VO) He's not having trouble now, by the looks of it. Oh Blimey!

Sounds of farting etc OVER.

PEGGY switches off abruptly.

PAMELA appears.

PEGGY: So Barry went then?

PAMELA: Went where?

PEGGY: Went, went---you know what I mean. I wish you wouldn't dream so much. That tablet worked then.

PAMELA: Did you give him a tablet? But he's

running---!

PEGGY: He can't be, he was blocked---!

PAMELA: He's running, I tell you, and Norman says he isn't to have even a mild opium drug, it only paralyses the intestines, he says charcoal's much better.

PEGGY: I won't have the children eating any form of coal and that's that.

She leaves. ARTHUR watches her exit with a sigh.

ARTHUR: This is a damned funny box, don't you think so? I head you and Norman are getting all the furniture. As I look at it, you're only two behinds whereas we plus our frequent guests are at least fifty. And we've got no damned chairs to sit on. When I entered your mother's little world twenty-eight years ago I had to accept a lot I thought funny. But I bet we'll see sense even in this box before very long.

PAMELA: Perhaps.

ARTHUR: So why did he do it?

PAMELA: What?

ARTHUR: Let his rats loose. Of course they're not going to give him a reference if he does that.

PAMELA: They just sacked him.

ARTHUR: For loosing the rats?

PAMELA: He didn't lose anything.

ARTHUR: Loose, loose!

PAMELA: I told you he was sacked!

ARTHUR: And I said what for, didn't I?

PAMELA: I don't know!

ARTHUR: He did loose his rats, didn't he? I'd have cleared this bastard out of my house long ago if it hadn't been for her! And you can follow him too! And get that inter-

com changed so that we can have a bit of peace sometimes!

He storms out. At once PEGGY'S voice OVERTHE INTERCOM: Pamela, Pamela, has your father gone?

PAMELA (shouting at the box) Find out for yourself!

PEGGY(VO) Arthur, Arthur! Don't lose your head! Do you hear? Go back! Please do!

ARTHUR all but collides with PAMELA, on his way back as she is on her way out.

He gestures to her and makes his way to the box, lifting the lid as quietly as possible. He fiddles with the knobs but finally gives up.

ARTHUR (keeping his voice low) You know what your mother's like. You'd better tell me everything, for the sake of peace.

PAMELA: I've told you everything I know.

ARTHUR: Then I've no more to say.

PAMELA: But I don't know anything more!

ARTHUR: What, a man gets sacked for no reason? Do you think I was born yesterday? You're just damned obstinate. Anyway, I'm in a hurry. (Fishing in his pocket) The hospital accounts came this morning. Here, perhaps you can clear up this little mystery.

PAMELA: What little mystery?

ARTHUR: A hundred and fourteen injections ordered by your mother, well that's all right, but here are two fifteen-guinea consultations for you. Gynaecological. If there's anything wrong of that sort you'd better tell your mother.

PAMELA: I'm having another child.

ARTHUR: Good God. That's quick work. He's only just got back---

PAMELA: I'm three months gone.

ARTHUR: Your husband wasn't here three months ago.

PAMELA: I know.

ARTHUR: Of course he was here---wasn't he? I mean, otherwise how could you have---? He was here, surely?

PAMELA: No.

ARTHUR: Oh yes he was, he made a damned fool of himself at the New Year's party.

PAMELA: That was about nine months ago.

ARTHUR: Good God! Are you---? You're not saying---? Is this somebody else's child?

PAMELA: Yes! Yes! And I don't care if it is!

ARTHUR: Have you told your mother? Now don't cry!

PEGGY (VO) I'm coming straight up!

ARTHUR: I hope Nancy didn't get all that. Well, well, we live and learn, don't we?

PEGGY appears. .

PEGGY: When exactly did Norman leave home?

PAMELA: About January.

PEGGY: Well, I think it was very foolish of you.

PAMELA: I knew you'd say that!

PEGGY: If we can bring it on a month or two, it might not be noticed. (Making swift calculations) January, February...

ARTHUR (looking at the chest) Listen, we'd better get a special switch on this thing so we can listen without being heard---

PEGGY (going to the chest and turning the necessary switch) It's already there. (To PAMELA) Does he know?

PAMELA: Who?

PEGGY: Well Norman of course.

PAMELA: I expect so. He deals in wombs and things all day. He hasn't said anything.

PEGGY: I don't think even a hard creature like him could deny a new-born child, though of course a child wouldn't have the advantage of being a rat, from his point of view.

ARTHUR: Still, I should hate to be Norman just at this moment, thinking of another man's seed in his wife's body.

PAMELA: I wouldn't have done it if---

ARTHUR: Yes, he went away, I know. He deserves it.

He jumps guiltily as NORMAN appears unexpectedly.

NORMAN: What's wrong? Nancy said there was trouble.

ARTHUR: There, I said she'd hear.

PEGGY (covering up) Come in, Norman, how do you like the new chest?

NORMAN: It wasn't my fault. I suppose she told you.

PAMELA: He means about the job. (To NORMAN) It's not about you at all. I'm having a child.

ARTHUR: Oh God! Fancy telling him the truth!

NORMAN (to PAMELA) And you tell them first? You're having my baby and you break the news to mummy and daddy first!

PAMELA: It isn't your baby!

ARTHUR: Oh, no!

NORMAN: What?

PAMELA: It isn't your baby.

PEGGY: Oh I'm sure it's all a mistake and the dates have been mixed up.

NORMAN: Yes, trust you to want to hide the truth!

ARTHUR: You can talk about the truth! You haven't even got a job, you don't even own the shirt you sweat in!

NORMAN (pointing at PEGGY) What about her---she never earned a penny---her father made lavatory pans!

PEGGY: Water-systems, we called them, and it was my grandfather.

ARTHUR: Well, as I said to Pamela, you can clear out of my house as soon as you like!

PEGGY: He's not leaving this house while my daughter's pregnant, and that's that!

ARTHUR: He won't leave anyway, don't worry about that. He only left last time because he had some money in his pocket.

PEGGY: You'd better take Norman to see the new picture darling.

PAMELA (to NORMAN, who looks as though he might spring on ARTHUR). Come on. Oh, do come on!

She all but drags NORMAN out.

PEGGY: Of course it's his. You know how vague young people are about sleeping together--- try fixing down which cigarette you smoked when!

ARTHUR: My only worry is the Fyffes finding out.

PEGGY: Oh, there aren't scandals nowadays, nobody cares about this kind of thing!

ARTHUR: Are you sure? I mean, there must be some respectability somewhere. And what about Martin Fyffe's newspapers? They're covered with scandal. He thrives on it---I mean, it must be unusual for some people. And he is our trustee.

PEGGY: She doesn't show yet.

ARTHUR: She does to people with eyes. Martin Fyffe was a doctor once. Anyway, I've got a meeting.

PEGGY: Well, don't show anything with your face. In the meantime I'll see what's true and what isn't. I think I know my daughter. She wouldn't sleep with anybody. Anyway, I watched every one of her movements while he was away. She was with the Fyffe family nearly the whole time. Otherwise she hardly went out.

ARTHUR (lingering on his way out) I mean I do like  
to keep a clean front.

PEGGY: Sometimes I wake in the night and listen in  
case he's moving around the house, that's  
really why I had the loudspeakers put in,  
I had a nightmare that he was experimenting  
with Barry and Rachel---

ARTHUR: Oh do shut up.

PEGGY: I think we'd better get him some rats,  
install him in the basement or something,  
get a laboratory going because that's the  
only thing he's interested in, it would keep  
him at home at least---

ARTHUR: See you at lunch time (going).

PEGGY (to herself) I get so frightened sometimes.  
I knew something was in the air today...

She leaves slowly.

2.

ARTHUR CUTLASS and MARTIN FYFFE,  
both dressed for the office.  
FYFFE is sitting on the chest.  
They are in a gloomy silence.

ARTHUR: Shepley Fine Consols went down a couple of  
points yesterday too. Nearly had heart  
failure when I saw that.

FYFFE: You'd make a couple of hundred doing the  
transfer alone, crossing two borders, I  
reckon. Still, you sleep on it, Arthur.

ARTHUR: Remember the palmy days of 1945 when you could treble the stake by travelling your money from Switzerland to the starving Rhineland and back to Switzerland again? I never learned German so fast in all my life!

FYFFE: Know what I bought last week?

ARTHUR: No?

FYFFE: A haberdasher's.

ARTHUR: What the hell for?

FYFFE: In fact, five of them. I reckon there's never been a slump yet when women didn't buy knickers and bras and suspender belts. That could save my life. Never did like investments.

ARTHUR: I've got my brilliant son-in-law to look after me in time of trouble. I could fetch sixpence a head on his rats. Get up a second, will you?

FYFFE: Eh?

ARTHUR: Jump up.

FYFFE: What's the gag? (gets up)

ARTHUR opens the chest and switches off the relay.

ARTHUR: Don't like being listened in to.

FYFFE: Cute gadget, that. But hearing the kids all over the house isn't my idea of fun.

ARTHUR: I suppose you know he lost his job.

FYFFE: Who, Pillinger?

ARTHUR: Yes. They didn't even give him a reference. For being a commie.

FYFFE: Balls. They're all commies in that lab. You can't get sacked for that. This isn't the United States.

ARTHUR: I wish to God it was. I get so damned frustrated in this house. I mean it isn't

as if I don't like him, he's all right, he's just round the bend, that's all. You know, I used to envy those American kids in Vietnam---I'd like to lay my hands on somebody, that's how I feel sometimes---guerilla warfare---get rid of a sort of load. Funny, isn't it? I'm the mildest chap in the world but what couldn't I do with a Schmeizer!

FYFFE: Schmeizer! That's going back some! Bloody frightening rate of fire. (Silence) Mind you, the Americans have got commies on the brain.

ARTHUR: That's better than having them on your property.

FYFFE: Dan Sutton should be flying over in a few days. Do you know how much he earns? Less than eighty thousand dollars a year.

ARTHUR: What?

FYFFE: And he sits on a firm worth fifty million at the least. I take my hat off to him. I call that real abstemiousness---eighty thousand. I bet you wouldn't mind him for a son-in-law.

ARTHUR: He's got the whole bloody pharmaceutical industry in the western hemisphere under his arse, and he don't say a word for himself! But this little bastard's on the yap-yap-yap all day as if he owned the world. He tried to tell me saccherine was a carcinagent.

FYFFE: What the hell's that?

ARTHUR: Gives you cancer. I just looked at him. But don't imagine he gives a damn if you or I get cancer. He enjoys the idea! He says it with that little glint in his eye! I mean, some youngsters are worried about the state of the world---not him! He's proud of it!

FYFFE: Is that what he does to his rats---gives them cancer?

ARTHUR: He transfers wombs. A rat under Pillinger never knows if its kids are its own, or

even where its womb is.

FYFFE: Fascinating, though.

ARTHUR: Yes but I wish he'd keep his mouth shut. Ever since he set foot in this house he's been spewing off about how car fumes overdevelop bones and bring on sterility and how an H-bomb can go off any minute because we have two hundred thousand nuclear flights overhead annually, and how we're going to get plagues through tinned foodstuffs and deep freezes, and all kinds of cheerful junk like that, just to show what a big brain he's got. He knows I can't stand people talking, not when they look as if they're never going to stop, anyway. And every time he sees me it seems to switch the spew on. I suppose I've got a listening face. Some people have. If he was earning eighty thousand dollars a year it wouldn't be so bad.

FYFFE: Suppose you give your promised reception for Dan Sutton, going to throw your son-in-law in among all those guests?

ARTHUR: Why not?

FYFFE: Because he's quite capable of taking Dan Sutton aside and telling him you're impotent or bankrupt or something!

ARTHUR: Come off it!

FYFFE: If Dan Sutton thought for a minute that your morale was low he might start mistrusting your judgements, than he'd pull out a few contracts, which are my bread and butter too.

ARTHUR: I could pull out my shares, see if he liked that.

FYFFE: He wouldn't give a damn. You've got less than ten percent of the equity. I'll talk to Peggy about it. She usually sees your point of view before you do.

ARTHUR: What am I supposed to do, then, put a pill in his tea?

FYFFE: Find him a job. Get him out of this damned research stunt, it's too near our line of business.

ARTHUR:

ARTHUR: He'd get himself the boot just the same, or sleep with the female staff.

FYFFE: Well, I'm not staying here to get dyspepsia--- I've told you the state of your finances and you'll be eating into your capital soon, my boy.

ARTHUR: Just let me show you that throw before you go.

FYFFE: All right.

ARTHUR: Over in two seconds---

He takes hold of FYFFE and does an overspin ju-jitsu throw. FYFFE lands lands expertly on his feet.

FYFFE: Not bad. I saw a gadget the other day--- walking stick with a slip-knife and a torch at the end--- Zuk! Like a sword.

ARTHUR: Heavy, I should think.

FYFFE: Not a bit. Transistor torch.

ARTHUR: We had a scream down at the office the other day. You know old Charlie Burns, he lives next door to that nuclear station, well he comes in the office and says, Look, they've developed a pocket-size atom bomb, here it is (takes small object out of his pocket), unscrew the top, drop that in your neighbour's garden and wait for the bang, and he goes like this (as if to drop it) and he had us all shouting WATCH OUT! Crafty old bugger, Charles.

FYFFE: I tell you what, there could have been an impregnable frontier of H bombs sunk in the earth all the way from the Baltic down to the Black Sea, only somebody in Germany spilled it to the press, so Dan Sutton was telling me last year. Well, I remember we had to print it. All the others did anyway.

ARTHUR: Be careful, you might get knighted one day for printing the truth.

FYFFE: Well, I don't mind telling you the idea's been motted. I only wish we could carry swords.

ARTHUR: You should buy that one you told me about.

FYFFE: I did. This is it. (Pointing his stick at ARTHUR's stomach) If I like to press a lever under this handle a knife springs out and slits your tummy up. Hand over all your money.

ARTHUR: I did, long ago.

Cries of Arthur! Arthur! from  
PEGGY, off.

ARTHUR: Here it comes. Stand to. Sentries out.

PEGGY appears.

PEGGY: There you are! I've been calling on the intercom, ever since we had it fixed up it doesn't seem to be on. Oh, Martin, how nice you're here---do go down and comfort Pamela, she likes you so much, and you used to be a doctor.

FYFFE: Comfort her?

PEGGY (at the chest, peering in) I thought so, it should either be on relay or receive and it's on neither (adjusting it). We'll have to call Dr Blore.

ARTHUR: We call him every day.

PEGGY: Barry's temperature's up to 101. And that rat-catcher won't allow another injection!

ARTHUR: Sssh! You've got it on relay.

PEGGY: He wants that fat doctor with the ears that stick out---

ARTHUR: A doctor can't help that.

PEGGY: I'm frightened and something's got to be done---these injections are quite harmless, and he says it widens the arterials---

ARTHUR: The what?

FYFFE: She means arteries. Anyway, I'll go down and see what I can do.

FYFFE leaves.

PEGGY: God knows I can't help loving my own daughter, and wanting my grandchildren healthy.

ARTHUR: Barry'll get the injection, don't worry. Now just calm down, (as he goes to the chest) I'm connecting to relay. (To the intercom) Is Pamela down there?

NANCY (VO) That you, mum?

ARTHUR: Mum my aunt Fanny, get Pamela!

PAMELA (VO) Yes it's me!

ARTHUR: Come up here at once.

Sounds of CHILDISH MOANING OVER.  
NANCY's VOICE is heard OVER---  
Come on duck it's going to be all right. Then MARTIN FYFFE saying:  
What's the trouble? Touch of gastric flu?

ARTHUR: I've half a mind to stop her allowance, until he comes to heel on these medical questions!

PEGGY (as CHILD cries OVER) Listen!

PAMELA enters.

PAMELA: Yes?

ARTHUR: He's got to have that injection! In fact he's having it.

PAMELA: But he's had five in nearly a week! Norman says the injection actually causes the flu, it's terribly dangerous!

ARTHUR: To hell with Norman!

FYFFE (VO) Pamela that's quite untrue, I gave our little girl half a dozen of these tubes at various times and she didn't even show a rough tongue.

PAMELA: Who's that?

FYFFE (VO) It's Martin Fyffe. I'll give it to him quick, why don't you come down and watch?

He'll be sitting up and laughing in a couple of minutes.

PEGGY (to PAMELA) You see?

FYFFE (VO) Come on, Pamela, don't be a fool. I used to be a doctor after all.

PAMELA goes out with a resigned sigh.

Incoherent NOISES OVER, and FYFFE's Where's the syringe?

PEGGY: Thank God for somebody with sense!

ARTHUR: I won't have that rat-man in my house any more!

PEGGY: Sssh!

ARTHUR (hissing) What the hell did you give him three hundred rats for?

PEGGY (also hissing) He's on a new discovery---at least she says so.

ARTHUR: He's found out they've got tails, I suppose. And you give him a whole rat kingdom! He's got the basement crawling with 'em---I can't go down and get a bottle of Burgundy any more---!

Over the intercom there is FYFFE's Hold him on his tummy!

A moment of silence is followed by A CHILD'S SCREAM, OVER.

ARTHUR: For God's sake! The clumsy bugger's caught a nerve---!

FYFFE's It's all, right, it's all right! comes OVER. Then CONFOUSED SHOUTING.

The sound, off, of frantic running on the stairs.

NORMAN appears out of breath, in a white laboratory smock spotted with rodent gore.

NORMAN: Where is he? Barry! Barry!

PEGGY: It's only an injection darling!

ARTHUR: Caught him on the nerve, poor chap!

NORMAN: Have you two been at it again? I've told you not to touch my child haven't I? You've given him six injections this week, you could cripple him for life, why did I ever come to this house (rushing at PEGGY violently), you bitch!

ARTHUR (trying to ward him off) Look out!

PEGGY's screams join the SHOUTS OVER.

NANCY (VO) You all right mum?

NORMAN: He's got no more bacteria I tell you! No resistance left---I told you he has to be pumped with lactobacillus for at least a month---!

PAMELA appears.

PAMELA: Norman!

NORMAN: You let them kill my child!

PAMELA: Leave my mother alone! Leave her alone!

FYFFE (VO) Anything wrong up there?

NANCY (VO) Are you all right mum?

ARTHUR (abruptly pulling up the chest lid and switching off) That damned box!

NORMAN rushes out.

PEGGY: He put his fingers round my throat!

ARTHUR (to PAMELA) I don't know how you could have married such a bloke---(peering into the chest) are we unplugged?

PEGGY (in tears) I selected those rats so carefully. There wasn't a blemish on any one of them. Well, it's all finished now. You can have your bastard child.

PAMELA: Don't say that!

ARTHUR: And don't you shout at your mother!

If you insist on having that child you can get out and find a hospital on your own money because I'm not going to help you!

PEGGY: Don't be silly---of course you are!

ARTHUR (still to PAMELA) I see he does nothing about bringing the child off---that means he's got no self-respect! And how are you going to face Martin Fyffe after this? and his family?

PEGGY: He'll drag us right down.

ARTHUR: And that child's going to grow up knowing he doesn't belong. His brother and sister are going to make that plain. Children can be very cruel.

PAMELA (whimpering) All they need is love.

ARTHUR:1 If you hate the idea of an abortion you can have the child and then give it away. There's a routine for these things---you don't even see it---they get first-class parents---people who need a bonny baby and can't have one of their own.

PAMELA: The child's mine.

ARTHUR: You'll regret it all your life, and I'll you why, because decent people like Martin Fyffe and Dan Sutton---

PAMELA: Oh please stop talking about Martin Fyffe!

PEGGY: They're going to look at you very funny whenever that child comes into the room, and you're not going to love that child because of it. I know a bit about human nature! And what about your husband? Wait until he's my age, you'll begin to take it out of him like she takes it out of me---!

PEGGY: Arthur!

ARTHUR: Every time he doesn't buy you a new dress or his coat stinks of rats you'll tell him he's the father of bastards and how much better the other guy is---he'll live to suspect that all his children are bastards, even Barry and Rachel---

PAMELA: No he won't!

ARTHUR: All right, then, listen: you can have that child, you can bring him up on an equal footing with his brother and sister, you can even keep that sponging rat-catcher in the house, if you tell me who the father is!

PAMELA: I can't bear any more---I'll be sick!

PAMELA dashes out.

ARTHUR: All this'll play me into Martin Fyffe's hands, I know it will---!

PEGGY: Don't be silly!

ARTHUR: God knows what I mean myself but I know it. I try to look on the bright side, always keep the talk on a certain level---(in a sudden outburst) do you think I couldn't see what you were up to twenty-eight years ago? Did you think he was really and truly interested in my stocks? or did you only assume that I thought so?

PEGGY: Please! (goes to the chest to check that the intercom is off)

ARTHUR: You didn't just deceive me---and your first husband---you deceived Martin Fyffe as well. That's why I like him---I knew it when I married you---when I had him as best man! You told him Pamela was mine!

PEGGY: She was! She was!

MARTIN FYFFE, off: Arthur, are you there?

They adjust themselves quickly.

PEGGY (CONT.) Is that Martin? We're here!

MARTIN FYFFE appears.

FYFFE: Thought I'd break the glad news. Dan S Sutton's in town.

ARTHUR: Oh, oh.

FYFFE: Secretary called. Invited us all to dinner. And then a club. American

ambassador might be there.

PEGGY: I've nothing to wear, so that's out.

ARTHUR: What? You've a wall full of gowns, and forty-nine pairs of evening shoes.

PEGGY: Not if the ambassador's going to be there.

ARTHUR: I suppose I'll have to fork out a couple of hundred quid for something you'll never wear after the first night. But I'll do it. Because I'm going to give the biggest reception this house has ever seen. There won't be a couple of butlers on hire like last time but a dozen.

FYFFE: He's got a cool four million dollars to get rid of in research grants, believe it or not. Well, I'm late.

ARTHUR: Good bye, old chap.

FYFFE goes.

ARTHUR: Just wait until that reception, I'll show you what I can do. Just for once I'm going to try and present a clean front to the world, a glittering one, because my front is clean, it really is!

PEGGY: Oh please don't go on. You know how it only eats your nerves away.

ARTHUR: Nerves! I don't know what they feel like! All I get is blows, nothing nervous---just pain, one dull blow after the other, sometimes between the eyes, sometimes in the backside, and that's why I seem lazy in the evening, because I need a rest (slumping on to the chest).

PEGGY: I wish we could be a happy family! Couldn't we try? Suppose we made a fuss of Norman? It's only frustration on his part, turning him into a wild man. Couldn't we buy him a new dinner jacket?

ARTHUR: A new one? He hasn't even got an old one!

PEGGY (sitting at his side) And then invite him to meet Dan? And put everything on a proper level? Put him on his feet and see if he stands the full height of a man---couldn't

we do that?

ARTHUR: Every time I shout I feel a strand going. Some people get relief that way but it makes me feel I'm saying goodbye. My father never raised his voice. He was a good man. I'll go to the office.  
(Rising) Though I feel more like a good night's rest.

PEGGY: Get yourself some coffee downstairs.

He has gone.

PEGGY lifts the chest lid and puts the ~~intercom antenna~~ to relay.

PEGGY: Are you there Pamela?

PAMELA (VO) Hullo, is that you mummy?

PEGGY: Yes, come up at once. I'm alone.

PEGGY carefully puts the intercom to off and closes the lid of the chest, then waits.

PAMELA appears.

PEGGY: Darling, I want you to tell me who the father is.

PAMELA: I can't.

PEGGY: I'll never say a word. And I'll see everything's all right for Norman. I mean, there won't be any fuss about having it. But you can't expect our cooperation if you don't give yours.

PAMELA: I can't. I really can't!

PEGGY: Why not?

PAMELA: It's just impossible---for everybody!

PEGGY: Then we know him!

PAMELA: No!

PEGGY: It's obvious we do! And I'll find out. So you may as well say.

PAMELA: I've got to think of the other person too.

PEGGY: Who?

PAMELA: The father.

PEGGY: Pamela, tell me who he is. I'm beginning to guess.

PAMELA: It's---

PEGGY: Tell me, Pamela.

PAMELA: Martin Fyffe.

PEGGY: Martin---? Mar---? Are you mad? It isn't true! You couldn't have done! Pamela! Pamela!

PAMELA: Yes, it's him!

PEGGY: But you weren't alone with him!

PAMELA: I was at their house nearly every day, you know that!

PEGGY: You fool! You fool! Do you know what you've done? You've ruined your father! You've ruined him! Arthur! For God's sake, Arthur!

PEGGY dashes out.

3.

The chest is covered with cloth of gold.

NORMAN, in a new smoking jacket, and PAMELA, in a party dress.

The children murmur in their sleep, OVER.

NORMAN stares at her.

NORMAN: When I look at your body it's like looking in the mirror at my own. That's why I want that child, Pamela.

PAMELA: You want Fyffe's child? You're an idiot, pervert!

NORMAN: I'd appreciate the variety of another human face---a little stranger---when I look at Barry too I see my own face---

PAMELA: Then you hate yourself!

NORMAN: What's new about that? A bit of Martin Fyffe might let the air in. I mean it. The idea excites me.

PAMELA: Every idea excites you, as long as it's against the heart.

NORMAN: Every new idea excites me. And you like them old.

ARTHUR enters with a tray of drinks.

ARTHUR: They're as strong as hell. I want everybody gay tonight. Your mother's waiting to be pinned up or something.

PAMELA: All right.

ARTHUR: You look terrific.

PAMELA leaves.

NORMAN: Is she really waiting to be pinned up at the back or is that your way of getting Pamela out of the room---

ARTHUR: We were going to have a talk weren't we?

NORMAN: Yes but can't you say it out straight--- 'I want to be alone with your husband'?

ARTHUR (handing him a drink firmly) Come on, get that down, and let's make a good evening of it.

NORMAN (as they touch glasses) When is he due?

ARTHUR: Dan Sutton? Any minute.

NORMAN: Generous of you to let me stay. The big American doesn't even know you've got a son-in-law, I bet.

ARTHUR: Well, you bet wrong. He knows Pam's married.

NORMAN: That's different.

ARTHUR: I wish you were kinder to Peggy. She was up half the night worrying over this child.

NORMAN: Which child?

ARTHUR: The one Pamela's having. We're scared of the possible outcome Norman. I mean, everybody's going to know it's not yours. I mean you can't want people to know you've been fooled.

NORMAN: Why not?

ARTHUR: You may think so now but people are going to--- well, I won't say laugh at you but--- anyway, that's not the point, but the chap who gave her this child, I mean he's always in the world to tell the story---

NORMAN: Martin Fyffe? He's not going to breathe a word, surely?

ARTHUR (almost dropping his glass) Good God, you know who it is? Good God! And who for God's sake told you?

NORMAN: Pamela of course. She tells me everything. If she kept anything secret she'd have to solve it herself and she couldn't do that.

ARTHUR: And aren't you jealous?

NORMAN: No.

ARTHUR: I mean, you're not wild---you don't want to wring his neck---you don't loathe his guts because he's rich and influential and he's dirtied your bed?

NORMAN: He didn't dirty anything. He gave her a child. And I want the child.

ARTHUR: You're lying of course.

NORMAN: Why should I? My attitude is, let's have everything in the open, let's all know who's sleeping with who.

ARTHUR: You surely don't think Martin'd stand for that, do you?

NORMAN: All right, then---let's keep quiet about it: so we're back where we started---a third child, mine. So where's the worry?

ARTHUR: The worry's him---every time I look at that child I'll think of Fyffe---cooing his way into my family---sleeping with my daughter when he's nearly twice her age--- the dirty, two-faced slime! And it doesn't worry you! Good God, where's your character?

PEGGY:(VO) Arthur, are you shouting?

ARTHUR (addressing the chest) If you don't go away I'll unplug!

PEGGY (VO) I only heard the shouting, it's the children I'm thinking of.

ARTHUR (turning to NORMAN again) All I ask is don't start distressing people tonight. That's all I really wanted to say. Let's have a holiday. Just this once.

PEGGY (VO) Arthur?

ARTHUR (again addressing the chest) What is it?

PEGGY (VO) Martin's just arrived.

ARTHUR: Give him a drink, I'll be down. (To Norman) I'd like to spit in his face. Whenever I go to bed I pull back the sheets and find it full of worms. All my life it's been like that. I pull the sheets back to hopefully and then---

NORMAN: Learn to live with them. You're going to for billions and billions of years anyway.

ARTHUR: Trust you to put that point of view.

NORMAN: Every man makes his own worms. In the last war you did a bunk and found yourself useful war-work in Washington D.C. and

that's how you met Dan Sutton and became a rich man. Now all that's worms. And you expect to find a clean bed.

ARTHUR: You'll talk about my war-time appointment once too often---I'm going downstairs---

NORMAN: You looked down your nose at Vichy France in the last war but you made a Vichy England---you sold out to the Americans who weren't interested in the sale anyway---

ARTHUR: Listen I---

NORMAN: And look at your guest tonight, the pharmaceutical giant---

ARTHUR: I thought you'd want a go at him!

NORMAN: He bolsters up your world, that's why you love him. Otherwise you'd have to think up some new ideas. I'll tell you something, you don't want them big on this side of the Atlantic, it doesn't suit you any more---your interests have switched, it's safer over there---you kept England static and held the gifted back for twenty years---!

ARTHUR: Now shut up!

NORMAN: I'm one of the results so I know!

ARTHUR: You! You're good for lab assistants, getting between their legs, that's what you're good for!

NORMAN: Why, you---!

MARTIN FYFFE appears.

FYFFE (to NORMAN) What are you doing? Put your hands down man!

ARTHUR (also to NORMAN) Get out of my house!

NORMAN: And leave you with this chap's babies---?

FYFFE: You want to be kicked out?

PEGGY appears.

PEGGY: Oh God!

NORMAN: And thanks for the dinner jacket (taking it off and throwing it at ARTHUR)!

PEGGY: I shouldn't have left you all alone!

NORMAN dashes out.

FYFFE: I'd have screwed his neck off if he'd gone on!

PEGGY: Dan Sutton's just arrived!

She follows NORMAN out, taking the dinner jacket with her.

FYFFE (handing ARTHUR a drink) Drink up. I told you not to let him in on tonight, didn't I? He drinks a lemonade and his liver runs riot.

ARTHUR: I'd like to take a fist-full of Blore's red pills and stuff them down my throat and say good bye and damn the lot of you!

FYFFE: Oh shut up.

ARTHUR: Well, we're all in it now, including you. He'll go and shoot his mouth off to Dan Sutton.

FYFFE: About what?

ARTHUR: Oh come on, don't try and look innocent, it makes you ugly. Listen, I never thought you'd pull a dirty trick like that. I wouldn't lay a hand on your life, you---

FYFFE: Suppose she laid a hand on you?

ARTHUR: You're not telling me---

FYFFE: That's exactly how it was! And I knew she wasn't exactly yours, exactly your daughter---if she'd been yours in blood I'd have laid off, insisted, I'd have struggled. But I knew she was Harley Johnson's child.

ARTHUR: Harley---

FYFFE: And I never did care for Harley Johnson. He's like his supermarkets---all strip lighting---show! Pam didn't take after him, thank God.

ARTHUR: You seem to know more about me than I know myself. I don't know daughters from wives---children from children's children---who's they are God alone knows and I don't care any more. I wish I could stop caring.

FYFFE: Listen---you use me to do your dirty work---I sack your employees for you, I break their hearts---I keep them on a string for months on end until they're cringing. You tear up half this town to make a car-park, and you use me to argue the toss with the local council while your wife is advocating a nice recreation ground on the same site! You don't give a damn who's in the way as long as you get there. Well, that's all right. I'm the same. But don't ask for peace. I don't get it and I can't ask for it. I sat up half the night and she called for more at dawn, and I cried when that second lot was over.

ARTHUR: I think you must have a cruel mind to say that to me---not just forget the whole thing and say you're a swine and leave it at that---

FYFFE: You can't face a thing can you? And that's the kind of man a woman weaves her plots around. I'll tell you something about women---

ARTHUR: I wish to God people'd stop telling me things and just get on with the pleasureable business of living. I mean, it is pleasureable. A nice drink---there's Dan Sutton downstairs---we've got dinner waiting---I don't know... I've got a constitution meant for another age.

FYFFE: I'd like to have seen you in the age of Britain's commercial empire, with Victoria and her German prince setting the pace, you'd have been a tank of ~~shon~~ and lechery. You forget to answer your letters, you make a decision one minute and fail to check on it the next---

ARTHUR: I'll go down and find Dan, he's normal at least---

FYFFE: What, Dan Sutton?

ARTHUR (stopping) Oh, don't destroy that illusion for me, for God's sake.

FYFFE: Never mind, Arthur, we all love you.

ARTHUR: I wouldn't mind if a certain tone could be kept up! He wants your child by his own wife, says he likes 'the variety'! Now surely to God that's affectation isn't it?

FYFFE: No, because he can't give Pamela what she wants---he's out to wreck where he can't build---she as food as told me, Arthur, it was pitiful, she---

ARTHUR: All right, don't go into details. You know, I'll never be able to think the same of you again. I used to like you, I mean I felt safe with you, I thought you kept a certain kind of skeleton order going in life, with your family and all that, I thought you applied a sort of French intelligence on these subjects and kept your mistresses away from your hearth and home---

FYFFE: You say that once a year. The fact is you invent me for your own purposes and blame me when the picture doesn't fit. You've lost faith in me at least a dozen times before.

PEGGY appears again.

PEGGY: Now I've settled it all, so for goodness sake don't let's have any more rows Arthur. She told me just now that she distinctly remembers the two nights she and Norman were together, she travelled up to see him while this girlfriend of his was away, she got the dates mixed, and you know what he is, he's always got his nose inside a rat cage, he's so busy mixing breeds he thinks human beings are the same. She'll have the child quite normally, so let's hear no more about it. And it's Norman's child. That was all silly hysteria on her part and the dates are quite clear now. Martin can be godfather again.

FYFFE (staring at her) What?

PEGGY: And you must come down and look after Dan.

PEGGY leaves.

FYFFE: What was all that?

ARTHUR: Apparently he's the father after all. When the girlfriend was away or something. Anyway, be thankful for small mercies. Phew! What we go through for nothing! I suppose I owe you an apology but you're not going to get it, I need another drink. We'll see how that rascal Dan is, shall we?

FYFFE stands open-mouthed.

FYFFE: Yes, well--- Lead the way. You certainly are a remarkable couple.

ARTHUR: You know, with Peggy talk doesn't matter a damn, it's the facts that count. And she always ferrets them out. I suppose that's how she keeps the family going.

FYFFE: Yes, I suppose it is!

They leave.

4.

The cloth of gold is still there.

NORMAN, with a surgical coat slung over his dresshis dress clothes, is sitting on the chest.

OVER THE INTERCOM we hear CHILDREN's VOICES and the deep, steady tones of DAN SUTTON.

SUTTON (VO) Well, you've got two charming little people here, Mrs Pillinger.

PAMELA (VO) It's nice of you to say so.

SUTTON (VO) Don't you think it's about time I met the

man responsible for them?

PAMELA (VO) The man---responsible?

SUTTON (VO) I mean your husband.

PAMELA (VO) Oh yes, of course, I'll get him---he went off somewhere---I didn't know you hadn't met---I'll call him over the intercom.

SUTTON (VO) The what?

PAMELA (VO) The intercom. It's a wonderful idea. We can hear the children all over the house---

SUTTON (VO) Is that such a good idea?

PAMELA (VO) My husband's probably down in the basement with his rats.

SUTTON (VO) His what?

PAMELA (VO) His rats. He's a geneticist.

SUTTON (VO) A geneticist? Now nobody told me that! First he produces the two finest brats in England and now he's a geneticist!

PAMELA (VO) I'll call him!

SUTTON (VO) Well good night children.

n THE CHILDREN make suitable good night noises OVER. There is relative silence.

PAMELA is heard, off.

PAMELA (off) Norman! Are you there, Norman?

NORMAN: I'm here.

PAMELA (off) Are you down in the lab Norman?

NORMAN: I'm HERE!

PAMELA (off) Well, where's here for God's sake?

PAMELA appears.

PAMELA: Oh now you haven't got back in that bloodstained outfit have you? Why do you always mess things up? He's asking

to see you---

NORMAN: You've got quite a flush. Power means a lot to you doesn't it? It did with Martin Fyffe I suppose---you thought of all those provincial newspapers he owns---

PAMELA: Shut up! You always get me upset. If only you wouldn't use words so!

NORMAN: It's because we're not agreed about anything that's all. Like Dan Sutton. I don't want to see him.

PAMELA: But why not? He was amazed to hear you were a geneticist. I think he wants to give you a job! Didn't you hear Martin Fyffe say how he had millions of dollars to hand out in research grants? Well why shouldn't you have some of that?

NORMAN: I saw Dan Sutton downstairs. He bristles with gold watches and wrist-calendars and pocket compasses---to give his worms of ambition a gilt covering---worms are what he means by soul.

PAMELA (menace) And what do you mean by soul?

NORMAN: Worms. But English ones. Not American. English worms have more tradition behind them.

PAMELA: Oh, you're very funny aren't you? You love torturing my hopes don't you? Like you do those dumb little creatures downstairs in the basement! You use their love and their sorrows for your dirty little experiments, just like the nazis froze people half to death and then gypsy women to sleep with them and wake them back to life again with love, just to see what degree centigrade life returned at, and it's just the same what you do---with them and with me! If you can watch an animal suffering every day, and plants tumours in them, and cut out their wombs, you could do it to human beings too!

NORMAN (gazing at her) You're talking almost intelligently.

PAMELA: If people knew what you were really like they'd put you in kennels with the dogs!

NORMAN: Instead, they need me. That's why they place me higher than politicians and even industrialists. (Rising) OK, I'll ask him for a job!

PAMELA: You couldn't---you'd talk about your rats and never say a word about the job!

NORMAN (as he leaves) Poor America!

PAMELA: Why did you say that?

But NORMAN has gone.

PAMELA takes up the drinks-tray and is about to take it out when ~~SHEFFEN~~ MARTIN FYFFE comes in, almost colliding with her.

FYFFE (urgently) What the hell does he have to dress like a butcher for? You remember my offer? (Trying to touch her across the tray) Pamela!

PAMELA: The answer's no!

FYFFE: You don't have to alter anything---just---well, you know the usual enjoyment we always had, without altering the bargain you see? I'm like a rock---you need that---an older man! You can get right away from that butcher! You look so pale! From Arthur too---from all this whining you have to do every day for pocket-money!

PAMELA (trying to edge away) What's the matter with you?

FYFFE: Did you get the fifty quid?

PAMELA: I found it in my purse!

FYFFE: I told your father all kinds of crap---I wanted to cut my tongue out! If he knew I was in love---!

PAMELA: So what about the child?

FYFFE: I told you!---I'll start a damned scandal if you like and involve my wife and then take the child---!

PAMELA: You say 'damned scandal'---you know it

makes you angry!

FYFFE: What's the good of wrecking somebody like Jean---I mean, you don't have anything against her! I've got to keep my home together darling. And this home too! You've no idea what your mother and father spend! If I'm wrecked they're wrecked too, don't you see that? When I turn my back they get themselves swindled out of thousands! She'll sign a cheque for fifty quid to save herself a walk---then spend three hours substituting sixty-watt bulbs for seventy-five because it saves a penny a day!

PAMELA (with a sigh, trying to walk off) Yes, I've heard it all before!

He bars her way.

FYFFE: Look, I gave you an offer, damn you, a flat and an income in any town you like, and a job---top executive, you could easily handle it---and you look down your nose! Pamela, Pamela (trying to embrace her)!

In her struggle the tray falls  
and the glasses smash.

PAMELA (breaking free) Norman! Norman!

PAMELA runs out.

FYFFE leaves hurriedly in the  
o opposite direction.

PEGGY comes in

5.

PARTY NOISES and MUSIC OVER.

PEGGY dashes in, chased by ARTHUR.

PEGGY (stopping) What's that on the floor? (As

ARTHUR grabs hold of her roughly)  
There's been an accident!

ARTHUR: I don't give a damn about accidents!  
I want an answer to my question!

PEGGY: You're hurting me! You've gone mad!

ARTHUR: Answer that bloody question!

PEGGY: I don't know what you're talking about!

ARTHUR: You went to the States in the Queen Mary,  
didn't you, in 1938? That's what you  
told Dan Sutton just now, isn't it?

PEGGY: You've spoiled my dress. Now will you  
let me go? I've got such a headache!

ARTHUR: Did you go to the States in '38?

PEGGY: I'll scream---I'll call for Martin Fyffe!

ARTHUR: You bloody slut, you've called for him  
enough---that's his child---you swine!

PEGGY: Arthur! (Diving for the intercom chest)  
Arthur!

They scramble with each other.  
He is trying to prevent her  
putting it on to relay.

PAMELA dashes in.

PAMELA: What are you doing? Leave her alone!

ARTHUR: That's right---you take her part! It's  
like you, isn't it? You've got his face,  
you bitch, you've got his sort of bunched-  
up eyes and his monkey-mouth and his  
cabbage ears and his hair that sprouts  
like corn-on-the-cob---I used to joke  
about it---I used to pull his leg---  
called him Mr Maize---it's the same nasty  
blonde straggling lying hair---(pulling  
PAMELA's hair)!

PAMELA (struggling) Leave my hair alone!

PEGGY: Arthur!

NANCY (VO) Is everything all right, mum? I'm  
afraid you'll wake 'em up!

PEGGY (rushing to the chest) Yes, yes, it's all right, we're playing a game, now go back to bed---

NANACY (VO) I'm mixing drinks in the kitchen mum.

PEGGY: Well go on mixing! (Switches out)  
Thank God he didn't hear!

ARTHUR: Who's he? Which of the men---the one you've been opening your heart to downstairs, about a trip to the States in 1938, which you never told me about in all the twenty-eight years we've been together, or the one you opened your legs to, old corn-on-the-cob?

PEGGY: Don't let him Pamela!

PAMELA: You pulled my hair!

ARTHUR: Damn your hair!

PAMELA: And damn you too! You're not my father!

ARTHUR: I know I'm not---I wouldn't want to be---you're a low, betraying whore and you're married to a rat-catcher!

PAMELA: You---

PEGGY: He's drunk! You can see it!

PAMELA: Get out! Go on, get out!

ARTHUR: Get out of my own house? I'll see you damned first, you breeder of bastards!

PEGGY (to ARTHUR) Don't you realise she's four months gone?

PAMELA is about to fall.

ARTHUR: Oh God!

they He manages to catch her and they half lay her on the chest as best they can.

PEGGY: Get some brandy!

ARTHUR: Where is it?

PEGGY: Well, where do you think---

She kicks a bottle towards him.

ARTHUR: No bloody glasses!

He goes out in search of glasses.

PEGGY: I'll go away! I've got the money!  
I'll take a degree in philosophy! I've  
always wanted to!

PAMELA: He pulled my hair!

PEGGY: Oh stop ~~compphainngg~~ about your hair!  
It's good for the roots!

ARTHUR returns.

ARTHUR: Here! (pouring a glass) It's Dan  
Sutton's glass---I just grabbed it---  
he thought it was some kind of spoof!

He offers the glass to PAMELA.

PAMELA: I don't need it.

ARTHUR: Come on!

PAMELA: No!

ARTHUR: Oh Christ haven't you got a little bit of  
magnanimity---what an awful family!---I  
mean, what do you think my feelings are?

PAMELA: I don't want it!

PEGGY: Drink it and let's have some quiet!

PAMELA drinks.

ARTHUR: Dan Sutton said 'Sounds like a dance going  
on upstairs!' I nearly said 'Yes, dance  
of death!'

PEGGY: You started it!

ARTHUR: Did I? I think you started it in 1938,  
on the Queen Mary!

PEGGY: Oh, for God's sake stop talking about  
queens all the time! I don't know what  
you're saying!

PAMELA (to ARTHUR) You said about corn-on-the-cob

didn't you? I see what you mean now.

PEGGY: I wish I did!

PAMELA: You mean Martin Fyffe, don't you?

ARTHUR: What I mean is my own business, my own unhappiness! Sometimes I'm scared to wake up in the morning, I keep my eyes closed. Especially with her in the bed. She doesn't wake up like anybody else, she jumps. That's because she doesn't know what the day's going to hold for her, she doesn't know what debt she's going to find herself in, for an act she forgot long ago! She doesn't remember a thing she does!

PEGGY: I'm not in debt!

PAMELA (still to ARTHUR) I was born in January 1939.

ARTHUR: She went on the Queen Mary in April 1938.

PEGGY: If only I knew what you were saying, you poor devil.

PAMELA: And what did she do?

ARTHUR: We weren't married then.

PAMELA: She was married to my father.

ARTHUR: He wasn't on the boat.

PAMELA: Who was, then? Don't say it! Don't say it! (throws her brandy in his face)

ARTHUR: You fool---you could blind me! I'll say it!

PAMELA: Shut up! No, no! Shut up!

ARTHUR: Of course---good God!---you know what you've done now, don't you?---you've---!

PAMELA: Norman! I want Norman! Norman! Norman!

ARTHUR: Don't scream, for God's sake!

PEGGY: Pamela!

PAMELA: Norman!

ARTHUR (to PEGGY) I shouldn't have talked to you  
in Martin Fyffe's office in 1939---1939!

NORMAN rushes in, this time  
dressed impeccably in dinner  
clothes.

NORMAN: What's the trouble?

PAMELA: Take me away! Take me away from these  
people!

NORMAN: What is it?

PEGGY: Arthur, get me a drink.

PAMELA: He pulled my hair.

NORMAN: What for?

ARTHUR: Oh, there was a bust-up.

PAMELA: Take me somewhere else, another house!

NORMAN: I could hear you from downstairs. So  
could Dan Sutton. He thought it was a  
dance.

PEGGY: Get me a drink!

ARTHUR: Oh, stop saying that!

PEGGY: Well, get me one! I'm dying!

PAMELA: I feel sick.

NORMAN: You'd better get to bed. Come on.  
My God what a family!

NORMAN takes PAMELA out as ARTHUR  
kneels to pour a drink for PEGGY.

ARTHUR: I remember standing in that office---he  
talked about you---always did---in a very  
objective way. As if you were potty.  
Which I suppose you are. Here (handing  
her the drink).

PEGGY: You know she'll probably lose that child,  
after you mauling her about, don't you?  
We're leaving, Pamela and I. I'm going  
to study philosophy. I hope you know  
that.

ARTHUR: Wouldn't it be better if she did lose it?

PEGGY:

PEGGY: I want my grandchild!

ARTHUR: What a fool you are.

PEGGY: Is it unnatural to want one's grandchild then?

ARTHUR: Put two and two together for Christ sake!

PEGGY: And I can tell you something else: while you were chasing me round the house your son-in-law was getting in thick with Dan Sutton. Well, I suppose we shall hear later what the subject was. But if he ruins your standing over there it's going to put you back by a few hundred thousand, and then you'll need me! My account's still good!

ARTHUR: You don't seem to remember we've got a joint account.

PEGGY: Nothing was signed.

ARTHUR: You signed it at a party, to show off, and you forgot it at once. Martin Fyffe-- he's Pamela's father, isn't he? Don't stare at me like that. He is, isn't he?

PEGGY: I think we should sleep separately from now on.

ARTHUR: You were on the Queen Mary with Martin Fyffe. You went across to the States together. You told Dan Sutton you were on the Queen Mary and I happened to remember that Martin Fyffe was too. I was nearly his best friend at that time.

PEGGY: He works so hard for you.

ARTHUR: He probably pities me. In fact I can see now---so often, his eyes---the way they flicker at me---with pity, you see! Probably! You were getting a divorce at that time, from somebody else...

PEGGY: I am divorced, yes. I've always been very frank about that. Harley Johnson was a good man. But he was no husband. He was married to his supermarkets.

ARTHUR: Oh, do shut up.

PEGGY: As I say, we shouldn't sleep together.  
If that's how you feel, that I jump awake!  
I never knew I jumped!

ARTHUR: What do you think of me? What am I,  
Peggy? Tell me that. What am I for  
you?

PEGGY gazes at him for some time,  
seemingly blowing him into focus  
slowly, as if he had temporarily  
been a stranger to her.

PEGGY: You're someone I love.

ARTHUR: Just someone?

PEGGY: My first husband. You see, the life I  
had before, with a man who was no husband,  
I'd like to cancel out---I've often told  
you that---you've such a stylish way of  
doing things---you're so different from  
the other one---

ARTHUR: Which other one?

PEGGY: Let's leave the party to look after  
itself, like we always used to. Do you  
remember, we often did that, in the old  
days, left a party in full swing and locked  
the bedroom door?

ARTHUR: We never did.

PEGGY: Let them look after themselves, we said.

ARTHUR (with enormous fatigue) Well, it happened  
once.

PEGGY: Shall we?

They leave.

ARTHUR: Does that lock work, by the way?

T W O

6.

No cloth of gold on the chest.  
The tray and broken glass have  
been cleared away.

MARTIN FYFFE is waiting impatient-  
ly in his outdoor clothes, walk-  
ing up and down.

ARTHUR comes in.

ARTHUR: Have you been here long?

FYFFE: Why---anything unusual? I've been  
coming at this hour every morning for  
the best part of ten years.

ARTHUR: I thought---

FYFFE: What the hell's the matter with you?

ARTHUR: Like a drink?

FYFFE: At this hour? Stop staring at me like  
that for God's sake.

ARTHUR: Nancy's gone.

WEEFEE? To hell with Nancy. You've got worse  
things to worry about, believe me.

ARTHUR: You're not going to frighten me, are you?  
I've had enough blows on the back of the  
neck---I feel like a rabbit---but I didn't

die! I wish to God I could. What a ghastly epoch to live in. Do you remember that feeling we had about a year after the war was over, that it hadn't been any use? At first when peace came it seemed like going back to the old world, where every man's life was his own. Then after about a year it started dawning on us: the war hadn't been any use.

FYFFE: Your son-in-law was with Dan Sutton today.

ARTHUR: What?

FYFFE: You're jumpy.

ARTHUR: What do you mean---with him today? He can't have been! He broke camp again. Yesterday morning. He disappeared. His rats are dying of starvation. And Pam's gone too.

FYFFE: What?

ARTHUR: Your turn to be jumpy!

FYFFE: What about it?

ARTHUR: Why be jumpy about that?

FYFFE: Is that what's at the back of your mind all the time? You can't prove it's my child---that's only her conjecture---

ARTHUR: Nothing's at the back of my mind!

FYFFE: Don't shout. And calm down.

ARTHUR: You can talk. You're sweating under the collar.

FYFFE: Well, where is she?

ARTHUR: I don't know!

FYFFE: You must!

ARTHUR: She went with Norman.

FYFFE: Well, why didn't you say so? They went to town, I suppose. Lunched with Dan Sutton, probably. He's landed himself a job in the States.

ARTHUR: What---my son-in-law?

FYFFE: He talked to Dan Sutton sixteen to the dozen the night of the party---but, listen, if she goes to the States too there'll be trouble!

ARTHUR: Who?

FYFFE: Your daughter.

ARTHUR: Pamela?

FYFFE: Well, she is your daughter, isn't she? God, am I fed up with this house! You're getting just like Peggy---mind's all over the shop!

ARTHUR: I've had some shocks, that's why.

FYFFE: Well, listen to another one. The Dow Jones average is down by several points. There's no buying. Blue Chips are down by ten percent---next week it might be twenty. Are you listening?

ARTHUR: Yes! Yes!

FYFFE: Oh, come on, man---this concerns you---what do you think I'm here for? You might not have this house next week.

ARTHUR: Why not?

FYFFE: Well, where are your assets? They're not over here, are they? Well, what happens on Wall Street happens to you!

ARTHUR: Are mine all right?

FYFFE: Yours, yours! I'm talking about the state of the market. Even the gilt-edged stuff isn't immune. It's ~~both~~ was down yesterday by five and three-quarters, General Electric by three. We can't sell: we don't want to buy. Nobody does. So we're stuck. If you're thinking of pulling out of the American deal you can't. On the other hand, will it get worse?

ARTHUR: He's giving Norman Pillinger a job?

FYFFE: He saw the chap's a born scientist in the first five minutes! Why the hell did you let him loose on that party?

ARTHUR: Who?

FYFFE: Pillinger! Pillinger!

ARTHUR: Why not? Why shouldn't he get a job?

FYFFE (spelling it out) Because he might blow a gasket one day and leak a lot of stuff in Sutton's ears---you know what a presbyterian he thinks he is---his dirt's OK but not anybody else's! Listen Arthur he'll be over there in Dan Sutton's company all day---he'll know all there is to know about your affairs and mine!

ARTHUR: You're frightened for yourself.

FYFFE: It wasn't my fault---I never thought it could happen---turned fifty---you don't fall in love at that age, not a hard bastard like me!

ARTHUR: That's none of my business---!

FYFFE: Yes, you've always kept your hands nice and clean!

ARTHUR: I'm in the middle of dirt, always!

FYFFE: And if my affairs are nothing to do with you, your blasted shares are nothing to do with me! But I'm telling you this--- you'd better keep that daughter of yours over here by hook or by crook or I'll ditch you and no mistake!

ARTHUR: 'Ditch'?

FYFFE: There, that's what it feels like when people tell you your whole life's none of their business! I tell you I'm in love with that girl---I'm sick with it---it's got inside my brain---I can't think of anything else! And by God she's going to stay over here, with me!

ARTHUR: I don't mind being ditched because I can't fall any further than you've landed me already!

FYFFE: I've landed you! I come here to save your life and you say that!

ARTHUR: You know damned well---

FYFFE: What---? Say it!

ARTHUR: I don't know.

FYFFE: I told you before, I can't help what happened. It was something I could never have predicted, or wished for, or thought the smallest possibility, in a million years...

ARTHUR: Yes.

FYFFE: You aren't crying?

ARTHUR: No.

FYFFE: I know it's rough.

ARTHUR: Get on about the shares.

FYFFE: I just came to tell you, you'll have to sell up this house.

ARTHUR: Sell it up? You must be mad!

FYFFE: Take it or leave it Arthur. You know my advice has always worked out. The money tied up in this house happens to be all you've got on this side of the water. And it's producing nothing, Artman've got to have a source of income, apart from what's across the water. It might turn out all right over there, but I don't like it. Of course Sutton's connected with Defence and all that, but it's a situation you can't predict beyond the next hour. And I'm thinking of Peggy too.

ARTHUR: Without money she'd go off her head.

FYFFE: And you?

ARTHUR: Oh of course---I take that for granted.

FYFFE: Anyway, you've got my advice. You spent your entire English fortune on this white elephant and you know what I think about that. It's more like a factory, except that it produces no commodities. Of course it might convert very well into offices---there's your chance. You've

got about fifteen bathrooms in this place, to take care of Peggy's thing about armpits.

ARTHUR: Oh shut up.

FYFFE: Well what else are they for? I've never seen so many bathrooms in my life!

ARTHUR: We have a lot of guests.

FYFFE: But they don't all go to the bathroom at once!

ARTHUR: It was her idea---oh for God's sake stop piling it on!

FYFFE: Is it true she gave a thousand quid for that shit-and-drip canvas downstairs?

ARTHUR: Oh I suppose so.

FYFFE: But you don't know.

ARTHUR: I'm tired. And everybody's on at me. I only get peace at the office.

FYFFE: That real estate lark needs to be financed too. You'll have to close up if we can't give it a blood transfusion pretty quick.

ARTHUR: All right, I'll sell. But how can I Martin?

FYFFE: Just sell it, man! Hand me the deeds and I'll see what I can do. Are you going to live in a bloody quagmire all your life than, slipping further damn every day, with the woman you love leading the way? Your affairs give me a headache!

FYFFE leaves.

PEGGY appears.

PEGGY: What wastthat about Norman?

ARTHUR: For God's sake!---you frightened me out of my wits! Were you listening on the---?  
(Hurrying to the chest and peering in)  
@D@R@, why do I always leave it on relay?

PEGGY: You had too much breakfast---I saw you eat three fresh rolls and take the egg meant

for Barry---you know what over-eating does to you---I listened in because I thought you might lose the thread.

ARTHUR: Oh, do go away.

PEGGY: I said it would happen. If you asked him to the party---

ARTHUR: It was your idea! And he is my son-in-law isn't he?

PEGGY: Dan Sutton hasn't called us as he usually does.

ARTHUR: He has no reason to.

PEGGY: He always thanks you for a party, like clockwork, two days after.

ARTHUR: He's given my son-in-law a job. He probably thinks I'm pleased.

PEGGY: Well, so you are. But it's the idea of--- I don't know---a snake weaving itself into your life, behind your back---

ARTHUR: Oh, to hell with your snakes! You've had them on the brain ever since you got that idiotic lavatory chain shaped like a cobra.

PEGGY: He could edge us out of the firm---

ARTHUR: What, take our shares away? I'd like to see him!

PEGGY: He could eat away at our reputation bit by bit, like a snake devouring something too big for its gullet but it can't stop. Martin's afraid too. It isn't sensible perhaps to be afraid, but strange things happen in this world---he might become a very powerful man. Just a word to Dan Sutton at the right moment might persuade him that you and I are nothing.

ARTHUR: We're all nothing.

PEGGY: Don't say that.

ARTHUR: You could have kept him away from the party easily enough---you have your methods.

PEGGY: I have no methods.

ARTHUR: Anyway, we're sunk.

PEGGY: I can't stand this house sometimes.

ARTHUR: That's right---you take five years to build it, put in God knows how many bathrooms and spend close on a hundred and fifty thousand quid---

PEGGY: I spent fifty!

ARTHUR: You don't know what you spent! You think you spent fifty, you think, think---that's all there is in this house, your thoughts. You try to make your life a safe shell, and you succeed so miserably. You're such a frail little creature, and your frail, frightened little half-thoughts go round and round the house all day. You seem so much bigger most of the time, in your funny shell. But then when we're together and everybody's gone you hardly seem there at all, I just get your funny little thoughts like tickles all over my skin...

PEGGY: Don't say that.

ARTHUR: You're such a frail little sprite.

PEGGY (as if to herself) Hot baths take the top fat off, that's why.

A desperate silence.

ARTHUR: You heard what he said about selling the house?

PEGGY: Yes.

ARTHUR: And you've no regrets? You've worked like a black for five years getting every damn-fool device in the world---and now you don't mind if we walk out of all these sliding doors that jam, and the plateglass windows that always mist over because they're supposed not to, and the three sets of lights in every room for reading, talking and eating, except that they fuse each other,---have I stood these crises every day for five years, over light-bulbs and locks and buttons and wires, for nothing? Just to keep your frail little mind from going into a spin, which it wouldn't come out of, because you're mad!

PEGGY: What?

ARTHUR: But this is your mirror, the house. It's mine too, now. Every time I look it in the face I see me---in the settee downstairs built not to look like a settee but a big black leather bath, and the table that comes out of the floor, though only when you don't expect it, and the drinks that pour themselves from the side-board automatically especially when there are no glasses ready---it's my own face, ridiculous and rather puzzled. Did you hear what he said about the shares? They might be paper tomorrow.

PEGGY: We could live in hotels for a bit, on the money. Rent a house by the sea. But Pamela's going to cry her eyes out when she knows---she's so attached to this house---

PAMELA (VO) Mummy, are you in? We've just got back!

PEGGY (whisper) Answer it!

ARTHUR (whisper) You!

PEGGY: We'd better go and see Martin Fyffe. She'd only try to stop us!

ARTHUR: Let's go the back way---sssh!

They tiptoe out.

PAMELA (VO) Mummy? Are you upstairs? Mummy!

Silence.

PAMELA (off) Mummy!

PAMELA comes in, with NORMAN behind her. They are in outdoor clothes.

PAMELA: I could swear I heard them. And I can smell her Madame Rochas.

NORMAN (looking round) Funny, it feels empty, as if they'd sold it. Children not being here, I suppose.

PAMELA: Nancy's gone. The cupboard's empty in

her room. I don't know why we had to come back. It was such a nice hotel.

NORMAN: I'm not blowing all the money before my contract's confirmed, that's why.

PAMELA: There's a safe streak in you, isn't there? You laugh at your sister for being suburban and joining a tennis club, but you're the same underneath.

NORMAN: About money, perhaps.

PAMELA: That means about everything.

NORMAN: Since Dan Sutton turned to me and said, 'I'll have your air ticket sent via the embassy' I feel less---spontaneous. I used to be scared the whole time, the tips of my fingers used to tremble in case I lost my job or your father threw me out or gave me a sharp look. It seems silly now. I'm safe, and bored.

PAMELA: I suppose that's why we came back, to get the scent of battle again.

NORMAN: You're a different woman, do you know that? I've been marvelling at you all day. And you know what makes the difference? You're married to a man with a job. And it isn't any job either. By God, I played that hand well! I don't know what put it into my head, that night of the party---it was probably you. I suddenly said to myself, 'Play their game, put yourself on their level, and they'll buy you at their price'. And that's what they did. In two minutes I was showing Sutton round the basement, demonstrating my smog rats and magnetic-storms cage, he was astonished, I could see the astonishment exploding over his face. A new idea was twitching its way through him, I followed it quite calmly, because I was actually putting it there. The new idea said, 'So this is Cutlass's son-in-law, no wonder he's kept him in hiding, he was afraid I'd buy him and ship him off to the States, which is precisely what I'm going to do'. You see, Pam, one doesn't struggle to get to the top of the stairs, one just walks up! Until that moment I'd been sitting below stairs like a valet. I thought they had a power of

threat over me, so they did have. And then all of a sudden I walked up the stairs, and there I was! And here I am! And you're bracing yourself to be my wife, at the top of the stairs. But why are you coming to the States, Pamela?

PAMELA: Because I can't stand it here.

NORMAN: Suddenly? You always loved this house.

PAMELA: I'd like to get away.

NORMAN: To a sort of compound? where the wives sit around intriguing? guards on the door, almost?

PAMELA: That's only your guess.

NORMAN: Dan Sutton's wife threw herself in the local river. And you saw his children! They've got every sort of automatic and dagger and cap ammunition and instrument of torture done up in plastic---scalping tools from Mexico, with dried blood on them---they play at disembowelling---gouging out eyes---they have ferocious little tanks with red gleaming eyes that shoot out flames---they burn their plastic soldiers with them, and these soldiers are made specially combustible! Do you want your children to grow up like that?

MARTIN FYFFE's voice is heard over the intercom: Pamela, Pamela! are you in the house? Pamela!

PAMELA (in a whisper) I can't face him!

NORMAN; Who is it?

FYFFE (VO) Pam! Can I see you? Peggy said you were here. Pam!

NORMAN: What's the matter?

FYFFE (VO) Pam!

NORMAN: I'll tidy up the rats.

PAMELA: Don't leave me!

NORMAN: For God's sake don't be a hypocrite! It's your lover, woman, do you think I'm

small enough to resent that?

NORMAN throws her off and marches out.

MARTIN FYFFE appears, out of breath.

PAMELA: Please go away!

FYFFE: I've just seen your parents. Listen--- I'm buying this house---they're selling up---

PAMELA: What?

FYFFE: I'll put you back here like a queen--- I know you love this place---you can have it all! I'll get Nancy back--- I've got much better maids in mind--- even a housekeeper. You can let out a wing if you want to---I'll look after the rates and taxes---

PAMELA (backing ip) You're mad!

FYFFE: It's never happened to me before--- don't tell anybody for Christ sake, not even your husband---I'm paying an enormous sum---they're asking a staggering price!

PAMELA: But it's mad! they can't sell it to you!

FYFFE: I've been sweating all the way---talking to myself---I had to do it, that's the madness of it---I only have to pass you and catch your smell and I go giddy--- I don't care if you never see me while you're living here---I'll sign it over to you---I've never done anything so crazy in my life but don't go away with him! He's going away isn't he? He's going to the States?

PAMELA: Don't touch me!

FYFFE: He is, isn't he?

PAMELA: Yes.

FYFFE: Don't go with him, Pam, please!

PAMELA: Keep away! Keep away!

FYFFE: He's in the house, isn't he? You've just come back from town---you saw Dan Sutton---he phoned me and asked me for a testimonial for Norman---I gave him one--- I said he couldn't have a better man--- Norman's thwarted in this country I said--- Norman'll give you the finest work you've ever seen---because I want him to leave--- I can't stand him any more---I won't have him near you!

PAMELA: Go away now---before it's too late---he'll come---please!

FYFFE: He'll give you a hell of a life out there! He really will! He doesn't know how to look after a woman. He doesn't even have the sex. You told me that yourself!

PAMELA: Please!

FYFFE: He'll not be good for the children! You don't want to go---you know you don't--- not with my child inside you! (Making her face him) Tell me why you want to go!

PAMELA: Because---

FYFFE: I've spent a fortune on you, I seized hold of those bloody deeds, I told them I had a rich buyer who wanted to remain anonymous! You can have the child here Pam! You can put mine with his---they'll be happy--- you can't take my child to the States! I'll divorce! I'll do whatever you like!

PAMELA: Don't you see? Don't you see---you're my father! You're my father! Oh for God's sake go, go, please! Let me die!

FYFFE: Your---

PAMELA: Let me die! Norman, Norman!

PAMELA rushes out.

FYFFE collapses on to the chest.

FYFFE (trying to call for help) Pillinger! Pillinger!

NORMAN enters, in his bloodstained surgical coat again. He tears open FYFFE's shirt. We still hear PAMELA calling out, off.

ARTHUR and PEGGY dash in.

ARTHUR: What happened?

NORMAN: He fainted.

ARTHUR: Martin!

FYFFE (looking up at ARTHUR, hardly able to speak)  
Ran all the way---broke the news---good  
sale---to Pam. Ticker, I suppose.

ARTHUR: Any pain?

FYFFE: No.

ARTHUR: Sight all right?

FYFFE: Yes.

ARTHUR: Move your limbs?

FYFFE: Think so.

PEGGY (to FYFFE) Why should that interest Pamela?

ARTHUR: Let's get him to a bed.

ARTHUR helps NORMAN in the work  
of carrying FYFFE out.

PEGGY goes to the chest and adjusts  
the switches inside.

PEGGY: Pamela, are you in?

ARTHUR returns.

PEGGY (cont.) That was heart failure.

ARTHUR: Cock---he fainted, that's all. I'm looking  
for the brandy.

PEGGY: He's not on our side any more---you realise  
that?

ARTHUR (stopping) What do you mean?

PEGGY: He doesn't want Pam to go to the States---  
and we do.

ARTHUR: Well? What are you looking so alarmed  
about?

PEGGY:1 We've sold this house haven't we?---  
there's plenty of money---so we're free  
of him!

ARTHUR: Who?

PEGGY: Fyffe! Martin Fyffe! He's hardly our  
trustee any more, except for a few govern-  
ment bonds. The Arabs say a friend's  
worth a thousand enemies if he turns the  
wrong way. That'll make two thousand,  
with Norman. And if we're going to buy  
more shares in the pharmaceutical business---

ARTHUR: Who said we are?

PEGGY: We must! It's obvious! We can't have  
less of a voice over there than Martin  
Fyffe and Norman!

ARTHUR: Norman hasn't got any shares.

PEGGY: But he's got Dan Sutton's ear!

ARTHUR: Got his ear? What are you talking about?

PEGGY: Oh it means he'll always be with him---!  
If we put this money we've got from the  
house into the firm we'll have a thirty  
percent interest, second only to Dan  
Sutton's.

ARTHUR: You've worked all this out?

PEGGY: Yes!

ARTHUR: But we ought to be buying real estate at  
a time like this---instead of which we've  
just sold it! And then the Dow Jones  
average is all over the shop---you can't  
rely on the market any more---

PEGGY: And Dan Sutton might need your help.

ARTHUR: What as?

PEGGY: Well, on the board, as a director.

ARTHUR: But the firm's in the States!

PEGGY:1 Oh don't be silly! We're going to the  
States!

ARTHUR: What?

PEGGY: Well suppose Norman took it into his head to manoeuvre us out of the firm? Oh don't keep staring at me in that idiotic way! Don't you see we've got to look after ourselves---see to the future?

ARTHUR: But Dan Sutton's a friend of mine---

PEGGY: He's given Norman a job! Is Norman a friend of yours? And if we're going to be poor we'd better find some work. Texas is a lovely state---Dan Always said we should settle there---

ARTHUR: It's true---he always did...

PEGGY: Why not phone him tonight?

ARTHUR: I'll do better than that. I'll drive to town and give him lunch, see what he says.

PEGGY: You still look doubtful.

ARTHUR: I am. But I can try my hand. It'll be a relief not facing Martin Fyffe every day. But then of course I'll have to face Norman every day. I wish every face didn't flash me some ghastly message!

PEGGY: With a big income he too might change.

ARTHUR: Yes. And things look more objective in the States. Even he might look sane. You get some good ideas. I have to hand it to you there.

ARTHUR leaves.

PEGGY: Give him all the best from me!

ARTHUR (off) Give who?

PEGGY (impatient) Dan Sutton!

The cloth of gold is present on the chest again.

PAMELA is sitting on the chest, and PEGGY is doing her hair for her, expertly.

PEGGY: We have a destiny in the States, that's what Dan Sutton said. We can't stay here grovelling any more, and paying taxes for it. We were brought up---at least I was---to expect a little power, and there we can have it, we shall have the entire fourteenth floor of one of the highest buildings in Dallas to ourselves, instead of being cooped up here among a lot of people who give you a nasty glance every time you take the car out, just because it's a little longer than most---

PAMELA (almost to herself) It's twice as long as most.

PEGGY: When we arrive we shall go straight to the showrooms and buy a Buick for the whole family, one of those where the engine's as big as a double bed, and we shall do a tour of the state of Texas, all of us together, and you'll enjoy it too, because you'll be in a new world, you've never known it before, so I can tell you, they don't call it new for nothing. And really Martin Fyffe gave us all this, you know. He always felt we didn't belong here---he couldn't bear to see us---I think these were his own words---crouching down to get in every doorway, like we do in England. He wanted to see the doors built to our size. And in the state of Texas they are! When he advised us to sell this house, it was an act of God, Martin was beyond himself, like a bearded prophet out of the Bible, a light seemed to shine out of his hair, we rushed to the real estate office, and he met us there, another coincidence worked by God---and he told us at once,

'I have a buyer'. And the buyer met our price. Martin signed on behalf of this mysterious buyer---whom we still don't know to this day, that's another Biblical feature, like the unknown pilgrim who calls in the night and bestows happiness and is gone in the morning. I'm sure that's why dear Martin had a heart attack, working so hard for us---it was the same day, you remember. And all that money has made a new life possible. You can share our apartment with us, it won't be more than ten minutes' Buick ride from Norman's laboratories, or else you can take a little place of your own.

PAMELA: We might take a big place. We shall have the money.

PEGGY: Not enough for a big place in the American sense, with a pool and a double garage. By the way, I've looked into the matter of schools for Barry and Rachel. I suppose you have too.

PAMELA: No.

PEGGY: Dan Sutton has a good friend who's on the board of an excellent co-ed school. Anyway, he'll put their names down in case you decide it's the right place for them.

PAMELA (rising) I must go and help with the rats.

PEGGY: I hope you won't have that job in the States.

PAMELA: He's so happy. He hardly speaks. He doesn't come to bed until four in the morning.

PEGGY: We can hear their squeals all over the house---

PAMELA: He began to wonder how the saints used to survive their tortures and diseases in the early Christian days. And he found it was because they fasted so much. They hardly ate a thing. And that means your body drains easily. All the toxic juices and poisons flow away, because the digestive system doesn't have to work so hard. He says all diseases come from bad drainage. And it's true, his rats have begun to look pure. Their coats are marvellous. The

sick ones have made the most amazing recoveries. Half the diseases he injected with his own hand have healed up. He administered strychnine yesterday and it hadn't the slightest effect---

PEGGY: How ~~MARVELOUS!~~

PAMELA: Even childbirths have been normal. There were no fights between the males, though there was a bit of cannibalism this morning just before he got down there--

PEGGY: It sounded like it.

PAMELA: And Norman doesn't seem to resent me any more, mummy.

PEGGY: That's more important than anything. He can starve all the rats in Christendom as long as he takes care of you. He has an appointment with Martin, by the way. You won't let him forget, will you?

PAMELA: I'll remind him.

PEGGY: Three o'clock this afternoon. And please don't let him wear that filthy surgical coat. (As PAMELA leaves) And do take a walk, and get some roses in your cheeks.

PAMELA: Yes!

PAMELA has gone.

PEGGY (calling after her) And you know Nancy came back this morning?

PAMELA (off) Did she really?

PEGGY: Came in like a ray of sunshine!

PEGGY also leaves, by the opposite side.

8.

MARTIN FYFFE is waiting, again  
in his outdoor clothes.

He switches the intercom to relay.

FYFFE: You anywhere in the house, Norman?

NORMAN (VO) On my way up, yes.

FYFFE: Oh, good.

He carefully switches the intercom  
off again, and closes the chest.

NORMAN appears---in his soiled  
surgical coat.

NORMAN: Hullo, are you well again?

FYFFE: Oh, not so bad. Mustn't overdo it,  
that's all.

NORMAN: The house is sold up then.

FYFFE: That's right.

NORMAN: You wanted to see me?

FYFFE: I did, yes. Nothing very important.  
I expect you're all keyed up to go?

NORMAN: Well I'm more working flat out than keyed  
up---there's a lot to do---

FYFFE: Is it true you're starving your rats?

NORMAN: Why, was that her story? She thinks I'm  
mad, doesn't she? I know exactly how  
her mind works.

FYFFE: Who's she?

NORMAN: Peggy.

FYFFE: She did tell me, yes. But she didn't  
say you were mad.

NORMAN: Well, I don't think I'm in any danger of

caring. I shan't be asking her advice on rodent genetics.

FYFFE: No, I can imagine.

NORMAN: That wasn't what you wanted to talk to me about, was it?

FYFFE: Good God, no.

NORMAN: Are you worried about Pamela?

FYFFE (a flinch) No, no! Why should I be? No, I've been talking things over with Dan Sutton---well, the three of us have been talking---Dan, Arthur and me---no, it's nothing to do with Pamela. I---I wanted to fix you up, both of you, hope you didn't mind.

NORMAN: I forgot about that---a trust opened for us both, and a joint account at the bank. I've been working so hard, I haven't had time for my usual moral scruples---I mean, there's no real need to give us a private income, not now---I shan't be a rich man but I'll be getting a terrific screw, which I suppose is just the time when people offer private incomes, isn't it, when you don't need them?

FYFFE: It isn't payment for anything. I want to see you both secure. I'm probably a fool but (watching him) I feel a certain fatherly concern for you. It might not be easy over there. People say they've got a hard time coming, the Americans. You'll have this little income to make you feel secure. You'll be at no man's mercy.

NORMAN: Why should I be at anyone's mercy?

FYFFE: We all are.

NORMAN: You said about you and Arthur and Dan Sutton talking things over. What's that got to do with my research?

FYFFE: Dan always has a conference with us when he's over here---policy discussions. That's why he came to Arthur's party, and how you came to meet him. What I wanted to say, Norman, is---always go for the

lolly. You might get the nobel prize one day for cutting up rats---

NORMAN: I don't cut them up.

FYFFE: What I mean is, don't start reaching out in your research. This is difficult to put into words---but don't go for an idea. That's why I gave you an income---well, partly of course to keep you and Pamela together---but also it's in case you a start getting interested in the results of your researches to the point where they touch somebody else's department--- I don't know if you're getting me---but over there you pay heavily for originality. I know the States like the back of my hand. They like the originality they can use, but the rest they kill. Now if you follow the lolly---go where the best money is promised, you can't go wrong, even if it means you leaving Dan Sutton, which is us---that's OK---you'll survive that way. But don't wander outside your brief. Don't start having attitudes about other people's work, or why they work, or even why you work. Because necks over there get guillotined at an awful rate. To you it may all seem nice and cosy, because people are big-hearted and good listeners, but it's a free-for-all Norman, with no holds barred. That's why I gave you this income, so that if you do stick your neck out you'll have a chance to withdraw it quick and get back to this country.

NORMAN: You mean, so that Pamela can come back to this country.

FYFFE: I want her happy of course. But take it how you like, Norman, the argument's the same. If you're guillotined, so is she.

NORMAN: But what does all this mean practically? At your conference, what did you all agree?

FYFFE: Well, I know roughly what kind of work you'll be doing, after your year's apprenticeship, if you'll excuse the expression.

NORMAN: And what work is it?

FYFFE: It's better that I tell you now, because

if you're going to stick your neck out you may as well do it before the job starts.

NORMAN: Tell me what work.

FYFFE: It was the war-slant of your researches--- I mean, your private researches---which incidentally Arthur and I always scorned---

NORMAN: Which war-slant?

FYFFE: Well, subjecting your rats to smog conditions and magnetic storms and that sort of thing--- just as you're starving them now---it means you're out for information about survival patterns, emergency conditions---this was how Dan Sutton put it---he wouldn't like me to be repeating this---you see what I mean, I'm only trying to show you where you're going---

NORMAN: Yes, well, I understand all this long ago. I naturally assumed it.

FYFFE: What, you approve?

NORMAN: I'm not thinking of the moral position. I work too hard for that.

FYFFE: But morality was all you talked at one time!

NORMAN: I think I know the dark world I'm working for, that's all.

FYFFE: Be careful, though. Let the lolly be your mark. Don't ask for freedom. Leave the job and get another one but don't ask for anything---

NORMAN (gazing at him) You seem almost concerned about me.

FYFFE: That's not far wrong. Look, there's another thing---I've never said this before but I think Pam's child should be brought off. It's a tough operation at this stage but all in all I think you'll feel better about it.

NORMAN: You do? And what about you? Will you feel better about it? removing your own child?

FYFFE: But you're a scientist, man---you can't say you've got humane objections to---

NORMAN: I didn't say that. But I'd expect you to have humane objections, as the father. I'm not saying you should have but I'd expect them.

FYFFE: Yes, well, I'm thinking of you and Pam--- I mean, I don't want you both resenting me---in later years---

NORMAN: I told you before, I'll treat the child as one of my own. Children sort of plug me in---I need them. Selfish, I suppose.

FYFFE: But you'll see my face---mannerisms--- I mean, as the father, I'd rather it done away with, and then turn over a new leaf, and you and Pam be able to see me as a friend---or family---

NORMAN: The fact is, she likes children too. She likes anybody's children, just as I do.

FYFFE: But suppose I get her agreement? What about that? She's not happy---you know yourself---she wants to get rid of ~~it~~--- we must listen to the woman on these occasions.

NORMAN: She's just ashamed, that's all. She wants to be a straight wife now because I've got a straight job. All women are success-maniacs, did you know that? And I want to ~~teanhbrofotge~~ maniafe for its satisfactions, not its decorum.

FYFFE: Oh, well, you may change your mind. By the way, don't breathe a word of what I've said, I mean about the war-thing---not even to Arthur---especially when you're on the other side of the water.

NORMAN: He'll be at least three thousand miles away when I'm over there---so how can I?

FYFFE: How do you mean, three thousand miles away?

NORMAN: Well, I'll be there, and he'll be here.

FYFFE: Listen, you'd better talk to Pamela about

that side of it.

NORMAN: What side of it?

FYFFE: Where Arthur'll be and all that.

NORMAN: What do you mean?

FYFFE: Listen, I've got to rush. We may not meet before you leave, I've got a month's over-work in front of me. Good bye, Norman, I think you'll make a hit. If you ever need help cable me. I'll even come by the next plane. Look after Pam.

NORMAN: Good bye.

FYFFE goes out. NORMAN gazes after him, wondering.

He goes to the chest and switches the intercom to relay.

NORMAN: Pamela! (No reply) Are you in the house Pamela?

PAMELA (VO) Yes, where are you?

NORMAN: The what-do-you-call-it---the one without any chairs---the Japanese room---

PAMELA (VO) I'll be up.

NORMAN waits impatiently, leaving the intercom at receive.

PAMELA appears.

NORMAN: What's this Martin Fyffe said about your father? I said we'd soon be three thousand miles away from him and he said well you'd better talk to Pamela about that.

PAMELA: I've been hoping they'd change their minds or lose interest at the last minute---

NORMAN: They're going there too!

PAMELA: Daddy's in charge of one of the research departments---

NORMAN: Which department?

PAMELA: Yours! It's only the business side, Norman---he won't interfere---we've got