

3 for  
£10  
£4 each  
3 pour  
€15  
€6 l'unité

AFTERWARDS

Maura Fenwick

AFTERWARDS

A Play

by

Maurice Rowdon.

CHARACTERS, in the order of their appearance:

GLEN.

HOTEL MAID.

JOHN PALERMO.

MURIEL.

SAM.

LOUISE GRIGG.

PROFESSOR JEFFERSON GRIGG.

Mr Parsons.

MYRA.

LEONARD HARCOURT SELSEY.

PERCY KLYDONHALL.

JACK RYAN.

CHARLES DORNELLING.

FIRST POLICEMAN.

SECOND POLICEMAN.

Waiters etc.

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE IN ENGLAND.

NOTE.

Scene-changing---or rather, the changing of props---should be incorporated into the action of the play, while GLEN is talking. Props may even be handed to him, or a chair placed for him. No attempt should be made to conceal or hurry the work of the sceneshifters. They should seem to be collaborating with him, in the act of unfolding a story. In the intervals the stage will therefore be clear of props, and sceneshifting will only begin again with the action. The same should apply to the beginning of the play.

---

-4-

1.

Hotel room. GLEN is in his  
undervest and short pants.

GLEN: It was one of those stuffy rooms that make you think of old times---a pile cloth on the table, a couple of armchairs, a lamp with tassles. There was a phone by my bed which I swore not to use for long-distance calls to my wife, just to hear her voice. I could manage five days of hotel life. After that, not a sue. Well, I'd been poorer in my life. (Takes up phone) And who said I was poor? I had a wife and a new-born child. You can't be richer than that. Hullo, hullo? Could you send me up some breakfast, please? Eggs, yes. (Replaces phone) I hadn't hung my suits up the night before (eyeing his suitcase on the floor), expecting my wife to do it. She'd bought me a special suitcase so that they didn't get creased. You hang them up inside and get tangled in pockets and zips, and all your studs fall out. (Lowering himself to the floor)

He begins a Yoga exercise.

MAID enters.

MAID: Oh, dear---! (Backs out)

GLEN: It's all right. Come in.

MAID: I thought it was two people at first. You see everything in my job.

GLEN: No, there's only one of me here.

MAID: Did you ring for breakfast?

GLEN: That's right.

MAID: Tea or coffee, they wanted to know.

GLEN: Tea---I never miss it. It costs twice as much where I live.

MAID: Oh, yes?

GLEN: Not far from Naples. I'm in wine. Left my family out there.

MAID: Oh, you're over on business, sort of.

GLEN: An advertisement. I wrote in and asked for details. And they said come over and see us. Well, I might make some money. It isn't easy making money on the land these days.

MAID: No, that's right.

GLEN: The weather started going wrong. About five years ago. Terrible winds, too much rain for the vines, frost in May. I lose a quarter of my crop sometimes. Can't take anything for granted nowadays, can we?

MAID: No, that's right. Do you always do that of a morning?

GLEN: Three times a day.

MAID: What's it for?

GLEN: Stiff back, low spirits. I don't say I work in the fields much but when I do it's all bending.

MAID: You ought to have my back, mate.

GLEN: Do you bend a lot?

MAID: Well, beds, heavy trays---it all adds up. I'll get you your breakfast, number twenty-three.

She leaves.

GLEN: That's better. Now for the plunge. (Rummages in suitcase for letter and finds it) Full breath. (Dials a number) Hullo, is Mr Jonathan Chandler Williams there, please?

SECRETARY (we hear her voice over the speakers) Who's speaking?

GLEN: My name's Glen.

SECRETARY: Is he expecting a call from you?

GLEN: Well, no---I just wanted an appointment.

SECRETARY: This month?

GLEN: What? I want it tomorrow. Or even today.

SECRETARY: Oh, he can't manage that.

GLEN: I've come a thousand miles to see him, he'd better.

SECRETARY: Oh, did Mr Chandler Williams write to you?

GLEN: Yes.

SECRETARY: Could you hold on a minute, please?

A pause for murmurs etc.

CHANDLER WILLIAMS (also over the speakers) Hullo, Chandler Williams here.

GLEN: Hullo, my name's Glen. I wrote to you from Italy.

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Oh, yes, that's right. Just arrived?

GLEN: Lats night, yes.

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Well, look here, suppose you go and see Mr Palermo. He's really in charge of this, it's his pigeon.

GLEN: Well, could you tell me what the work's in connection with?

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Well, as I say, I think you ought to talk to Mr Palermo about that. He can ~~you~~ put you in the picture better than I can.

GLEN: It's work by commission, isn't it?

CHANLDER WILLIAMS: That's right.

GLEN: It doesn't mean going from door to door, does it?

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Oh, no, I don't think so. But you'd better---

GLEN: Do I have to sell anything?

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Well, in a sense, I suppose, yes. But John'll---

GLEN: In what sense?

CHANLDER WILLIAMS: Well, I mean, you have to sell yourself in a way----

GLEN: Myself?

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Well, as I say, Mr Palermo can explain it much better, really. It's his baby, entirely.

You'll like him---I mean, if you come from Italy---  
he's got foreign blood. A great spark.

GLEN: But don't I get any sort of income at all?

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: You get a pretty big commission, so I don't  
think income is going to worry you. Look, let me give  
you John's address. He's got an office in Maidenhead  
Lane, just off the City. Half way down, number eighty,  
it might be eighty-A.

GLEN: Half a minute. I'll get a pencil. Maiden---?

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Maidenhead Lane, number eighty or eighty-A.  
Half way down, first floor.

GLEN: Well, thank you.

CHANDLER WILLIAMS: Pleasure. Go and see him today. And I  
hope we meet some time. Good bye.

GLEN: Good bye. (Replaces phone) So I went to see Johnny  
Palermo. He was lean and smart. His eyes were grey,  
which one only noticed after thinking them black like  
his hair, and they seemed filmed-over, by smoking perhaps,  
or late nights. His mouth was well formed and ruby-red,  
with something petulant about it, and his skin smooth,  
darkly olive. When he frowned it was as if two little  
black lines had suddenly been painted in between his eye-  
brows, and weren't natural there at all, disappearing  
quickly and leaving smoothness again. 'Call me Johnny',  
he said.

2.

JOHNNY PALERMO'S office.

PALERMO: Did he tell you I was related to one of the Czars of  
Russia?

GLEN: No.

PALERMO: That my father used to be a big shot in the Mafia?

PALERMO: Or that I used to run a hotel in Cairo---and a damned  
good one it was, too?

GLEN: No.

PALERMO: Well, it's all true. Of course, it may not be up your  
street, that's for you to decide. All you need is  
a bit of neck---and powers of persuasion.

GLEN: You need neck for everything.

PALERMO: Another thing, tuck yourself under somebody's wing who doesn't really want you there. If they hate you, get closer. They'll learn to like it. Hatred's a business property, Glen---mind if I call you that?

GLEN: No.

PALERMO: And you call me Johnny. You see, Glen, they're all missing something, everybody is, and you've got to make them feel it's you. It can happen in a minute. Girls have lost their honours in a minute, men their fortunes. You see, people feel low these days, they don't know who they are, they haven't got time. And that's where my pictures come in.

GLEN: What pictures?

PALERMO: All life is pictures. A man has a picture of himself, and he has a picture of other people based largely on his picture of himself. I tell you, old chap, I've worked all this out, a man has a picture of what his clerks and typists think of him, and ~~if he doesn't know who he is,~~ sometimes that picture's good, and sometimes it's horrible. And this is where he needs me. He needs a steady picture. I provide steady pictures. Now he may not believe in me. That's all right. He believes in the picture I give him, because he needs it. He may look down on me and think I'm a scrounger, but he takes the picture I give him, though usually he can't see that ~~very cleverly~~ I've made him compare himself favourably with me. Then he sees bits in the papers, and though he knows I put them in he still thinks they're the truth, he needs to think so, you see. Now I dare say you smiled when Chandler Williams said you were going to sell yourself. But I'll show you how it's done. In fact, it happens all the time.

GLEN: But what about---

PALERMO: You see, Glen, the way people are formed in our world, their pictures are very poor. But everybody thinks he's something. This you can take as your sketch, and begin from there. Naturally the picture must be one the man can deceive himself into thinking is himself. You can't sell a ~~bad man as a good one,~~ fool as a clever man, but you can sell a bad man as a good one, in fact that's one of my principal sales. Never try to give a man what you think his picture ought to be if he were you. Let him walk into the jaws of hell if he wants to, he may like it there.

MURIEL, his secretary, enters.

MURIEL: It's lunch time.

PALERMO: Well, go and eat, darling.

MURIEL: That's what I'm waiting to do.

PALERMO: Listen, honey, I pay at the end of the month.

MURIEL: Except when it comes, then you pay quarterly. Come on, cough, I'm hungry.

PALERMO: Will a quid be enough? (Handing it to her) Better be. Oh, darling, before you go, bring me in the midday final, will you? I've got a horse running.

MURIEL (leaving) I hope it loses.

PALERMO: Jack Ryan, (opening a drawer and taking out whisky bottle and two glasses) Jack Ryan is to my mind the finest editor in town. He puts my pictures in the paper. Here's health.

GLEN: Health.

They drink.

PALERMO: Well, Glen, if you really have left several acres of boose to do business with me, you've found your man.

GLEN: Do you think you've found yours?

PALERMO: I'll tell you when I have doubts---the minute they happen.

MURIEL brings midday paper.

PALERMO (studying the paper at once) By the way, this is Mr Glen, Muriel.

GLEN: How do you do.

MURIEL: Hullo. (Leaves).

PALERMO (still studying) Work's my whole life. I come in at four in the morning sometimes. My evenings at the club are all business, really. Nice club...called the 1810----Muriel!! Muriel, come back quick!

MURIEL (appearing again) I----!

PALERMO: Take this down. Professor Grigg. G-R-I-G-G. Get his number, we'll be bold. He's an American. Just arrived in Cambridge and they're putting him up at King's College. Say you're the Times.

MURIEL: The what?

PALERMO: Say you're the Times and Mr Palermo the features editor



PALERMO (looking up a train timetable) Well, of course, that's just pessimism. There's one at three, fifty-nine. You'll have to rush. (Jumping up) Come on, what are you waiting for, you won't pick up a commission like that, you know! Here's a fiver. And I want the change even if it's one and sixpence. Don't forget (as GLEN leaves), go to King's College. Above all get her talking, you'll learn far more. And, Glen (who has now gone), if there should be a Times man there, say Have you heard this one, our secretary phoned up this American geezer and said she was the Times, what a scream eh, and some cheek, she's always doing it, her way of a joke, it'll get her into trouble one day! ..... He looks so helpless.

3.

Porter's lodge, King's College.

GLEN: It was dark when I arrived and I got a taxi at Palermo's expence. Lights wefe on in the college rooms. Youths hurried by with bright, perplexed, untouched faces. The porter in his warm little office couldn't place any Professor Grigg, and I thought for a moment that Palermo had sold me for a puppy. But he came in yesterday.

PORTER: Not in here he didn't.

GLEN: But the papers said he did.

PORTER: Not this college, mate. But I'll call the Bursar if you like, just to make sure. (Goes into inner office) *Sam here.*

~~GLEN~~: Hullo, Is the Bursar there? There's a gentleman here, says have we an American professor by the name of Grigg, arrived yesterday, and it was in the papers? I see, yes, well, I was going to say, we haven't had that name, not as passed through here. I thought I might have missed your Buttery list today, how are your legs, sir, all right? (Returning) Well, I've been on to the Bursar and he sayd, yes, there's a professor of that name and the papers have got it wrong like they get everything wrong, and he's staying in digs, and the college never

invited him to give any lectures. Anyway, he's not here, and he's not ours.

GLEN: Lucky for you. He writes books about how it's going to be all right if an atom bomb falls.

PORTER: Oh, does he? (Strokes his chin) Oh.

GLEN: Can you give me his address?

PORTER: If you like to slip across there to the Bursar's office, they'll give it to you.

GLEN: How do they know, if they didn't invite him?

PORTER: Are you a reporter?

GLEN: Yes.

PORTER: I thought you were. Job I wouldn't mind. Used to be a policeman. Better than padding round streets trying the locks on the doors. You get around a bit, I dare say?

GLEN (as he begins to leave) Yes.

PORTER: Working for which paper would that be?

GLEN (calling out) Agency. Articles syndicated.

PORTER: Oh, yes. Nothing simple in this world. I thought you was going to say something glamorous like the Times.

4.

The GRIGG apartment.

GLEN: I walked through the early Cambridge night, past shop windows where vapour had formed, along narrow lanes. I found their place, a tall apartment block that shone in the narrow mediaeval lane like a gilt fool. There was a glowing foyer and a porter more

splendid than Sam. A lift, too: one of those that seem not to move. Then a tall white doorway with a kind of Palladian frame, and a quiet bell (we hear this) that showed a tiny light behind, where the name Dornelling and not Grigg was printed. A girl smelling of kitchen showed me in. Then the professor's wife---

LOUISE GRIGG enters.

GLEN: ---great laughter lines round her mouth---eyes screwed up with---pain, grief---?

LOUISE: Are you the fake Times man?

GLEN: Yes.

LOUISE: Well, come in and have a drink. He's waiting for you. Where the hell is he? Well, sit yourself down.

GLEN: How did you know I was fake?

LOUISE: A real Times man called us up. He went to college with Jeff.

GLEN: There was a mistake in the office, I think---some girl, she's new---I didn't get the details.

LOUISE: I certainly got some hot talk from your office---that man's certainly got a mouth---

GLEN: You talked to a man?

LOUISE: At your agency, if that isn't fake too. What can I mix you?

GLEN: I'd like a whisky and soda.

LOUISE (mixing) Jeff! Come on, will you? He's shy, that's all (with a wink).

JEFFERSON GRIGG enters.

GRIGG: Well, look at that. Wife drinks with unknown visitor.

LOUISE: And where the hell do you go in the winter time? I was *ital* looking everywhere!

GRIGG: As a matter of fact, I wonder you didn't hear me pull the chain. How are you, Mr---?

GLEN: Glen.

GRIGG: She'll be following me round with bloodhounds soon.

LOUISE: That's something for you to print.

GLEN: I'll print what you say I can print.

LOUISE: Well, our visitor's a gentleman at least.

GRIGG: Oh, for Christ's sake don't bring in that word. Gentleman, my arse. Anyway, get me a drink. I've had an afternoon of Cambridge dons and all they drink is tea.

LOUISE: Get it yourself.

GRIGG: Boy, you sound high already.

LOUISE: I am.

GLEN: Well, marriage isn't all a bed of roses, is it?

GRIGG: You're telling me. It's been like this for ten years and we believe in it. Is that right, Louise?

LOUISE: I guess it is.

GRIGG (with his drink) Listen, what kind of an outfit have you got up there?

GLEN: Well, sort of agency.

GRIGG: You sound quite a crew. First you fake a call from the Times, then your boss seduces my wife down the phone. That was about the randiest phone conversation we ever heard, what do you say, Louise?

LOUISE: I'm keeping quiet. Can you stay to dinner?

GLEN: I'd love to.

LOUISE (leaving) I'll tell the girl.

GRIGG: Was that strong enough?

GLEN: I'll say.

GRIGG: Let me get you another (taking his glass).

GLEN: You're giving a few lectures? The papers were right about that, is suppose? They were wrong about your address, said you were at King's.

GRIGG: I'm lecturing in seven countries, Glen. I'll be on and off that damned Continent like a jack in the box.

LOUISE (returning) Louise is going to feel lonesome all right.

GRIGG: Well, you're not exactly a stay-at-home girl, so I don't think you'll suffer.

LOUISE: Still, this isn't London.

GRIGG: You'll be there! (Handing GLEN his drink) Listen,

how does the English press see me? You know, that's my reason for coming over, I got such a hell of a bad press for this book of mine. You know, I never did say the bomb was nice.

LOUISE: Listen, Jeff, I think you'd better see if she's put the glasses out right.

GRIGG (leaving) Jesus, can't she even do that?

LOUISE: Don't take too much notice of him. He's overwrought with too much work. Are you married, Mr---?

GLEN: Call me Glen. Yes, I am.

LOUISE: Children?

GLEN: One, new born.

LOUISE: Oh, well, that's nice.

GRIGG (returning) You know, this girl can't lay cutlery. Is that a peculiarity of the Irish? Listen, Glen, I can put it all in a nutshell. I wrote a book called Afterwards about how to save humanity in the event of a nuclear war, and that went all over the world as my advocating nuclear war. Now I wouldn't mind if people knew what I meant by the Afterwards but they don't. They think I mean after the Bomb falls, in the future, but I don't. I mean now. I mean ever since Hiroshima, in 1945. A curtain fell on history, Glen, and we live in the afterwards of that. It changed everything. We're all living on a precipice. Just a touch of somebody's finger and the whole world disappears. That's a big change, and nobody seems to realise that it produces a completely different sort of life. It means there's nothing cosy any more, nothing we can really call our own--- therefore no intimacy. Do you see what I mean? It means we're all pawns, we're extras on a film set where you never see the man who runs it all, and you don't know what the film's about, but you go through the scene out of habit and because everybody else is doing it. But we don't have the power of decision any more! And we've got to face up to that. No more cosy little ~~exist~~ crises like you got in the old Hitler days, no more cosy TNT raids when people could get a kick out of the bang. It's all phoney, Glen, what we experience nowadays, all our family life, everything--- because it's under sentence of death. Remember what Macbeth says after his first murder? 'From this instant there's nothing serious in mortality, all is but toys, grace and reborn is dead, the wine of life is drawn.' That's us, Glen. The wine of life is drawn, boy. We did a murder in 1945 that we can't turn back from. We murdered respect for the human creature. Hitler started breaking the respect down, with his extermination camps, but that was only a beginning. Now

we're right there. We're his children, OK. And we've got to go on and on, like Macbeth. The murders can't stop. I'm only facing facts, trying to see some chance of survival in all this. Old Macbeth had to murder all his friends, we've got to do the same. He had to create a secret service that spanned all of Scotland, which was the universe as far as he was concerned. And that's hell. He created hell for everybody round him, even the ordinary country folk near by. They were terrified. And that's what we're living in now---hell. And people don't know it. They like to think they're still living in the Before. But they're faking it. Everything looks the same, from the food they eat to the air they breathe. But they can't even breathe God's air any more. If it isn't diesel fumes it's radioactive. Now my book Afterwards tries to make 'em face up to that---rationally. That's what I mean by the rationalisation of hell---one of my chapter-heads. Since 1945 the human being's been dead, Glen. That's my message.

LOUISE: I think dinner's ready.

GRIGG: About time too. What does she do out there? Come on, Glen.

LOUISE: Slow cooks are the best.

GRIGG: She should be cooking at the Ritz at that rate.

GLEN falls behind them as they go out, so that he remains alone.

5.

JOHN PALERMO's Office.

GLEN: Palermo wasn't there when I got back. So we met next morning at the office. There were blue rims under his eyes and he looked pale. The whites of his eyes weren't really white, they were shot through with little broken vessels. He must have been overdoing it.

PALERMO (handing him a newspaper) What do you think of that, by the way?

GLEN (reading the headline) I ALWAYS SAY IT'S THE SHAPE THAT GETS HIM SAYS MISSILE PROFESSOR'S WIFE. "It's the way that puff of smoke goes up, and the shape," said Louise Grigg, 46-year-old wife of American professor Jefferson Grigg, known in nuclear circles as Mr. Afterwards. "I guess Freud would have something to say about that," she added with a laugh. Life with Jefferson hasn't always been a bed of roses, though. He told me confidentially today that they've been coasting near the divorce courts for the last ten years. While no nuclear scientist or even Sunday physicist husky, deep-voiced Jefferson Grigg has made it his business to study all the published data about the likely results of the Big Flash when it comes. To quote his funereal volume Afterwards, we could live quite snugly in the peace that total devastation secures for us. The professor, educated at Stanford university, believes that we owe our present happiness to the manufacture of nuclear weapons up to saturation point. "Take the nuclear mushroom," said his wife, "now if that's not the symbol of something my name's not Lou!" God, you didn't put all that in, did you? They'll think it's me! I actually used the words 'bed of roses' when I was there!

PALERMO: Of course I did it, there's my touch written all over it, with a bit of cutting by Jack Ryan. I asked for a hundred quid and he gave me fifty.

GLEN: But they're nice people!

PALERMO: I know they're nice, I talked to his wife for half an hour. In fact, I fixed up dinner with her. What's she like? Superb, eh? Forty-six is just my dish of tea.

GLEN: She's nice, yes.

PALERMO: Don't keep saying nice! Has she got it?

GLEN: It? Yes, I suppose so.

PALERMO: I'll take her to the Bagatelle then, like she asked me to.

(Phone rings) Hullo? Yes, he's sitting right here.  
For you. (Hands GLEN the phone) I must dash.

PALERMO leaves.

GLEN: Yes?

GRIGG'S voice (over the speakers) Is that Glen? Well, I guess  
you know who this is.

GLEN: Is that Jeff?

GRIGG: You can cut out the Jeff and call me professor. You  
know what I think of you?

GLEN: No?

GRIGG: That's a lie. By the sound of your voice, you glass-  
eyed phoney, you know what I think of you and you know  
I'm right.

GLEN: Listen, I---

GRIGG: OK, we know it was you because of that bed of roses touch.  
What my wife thinks of you couldn't be put down on paper.  
Listen, I'm very sorry about this. I don't hate you but  
I despise you quite a bit. Mostly I'm just sorry, because  
I thought you were a nice guy. How did you get caught  
up in this job?

GLEN: Well, it just happened, I was----

GRIGG: You can always get out. Ever hear of the emperor  
Constantine?

GLEN: I think so, yes.

GRIGG: He came back to Rome with all the known crimes on his  
shoulders, he'd just about killed everybody in his family,  
and he had a hell of a big family. And that's how he  
became a Christian, because somebody told him it was the  
only religion that forgave a man everything he did.  
There's still room for you.

GLEN: Thanks.

GRIGG: Well, I don't suppose we'll bump into each other again  
but if we do it'll be a big bump. Good bye.

MURIEL enters with tea.

MURIEL: Do you take sugar?

GLEN: Yes.

MURIEL: How many?

GLEN: One. Did you hear that?

MURIEL: He sounded angry when I put him through. I wonder you went all that way yesterday just because he asks you.

GLEN: You must have known him a long time.

MURIEL: Not so long. But it's certainly been vivid.

She leaves.

GLEN: I sat there sipping my tea. It was dark and drab outside, with clouds lowering over the roofs. When Palermo came back I let him have it.

PALERMO enters.

PALERMO: Still here-?

GLEN: You got me into a nice mess with that professor. Suppose he sues me for libel?

PALERMO: But what's he griping about? He asked for publicity and he got it!

GLEN: He didn't ask for the kind he got.

PALERMO: All publicity's the same, Glen, it doesn't matter what you say as long as it takes up space. What the hell does he think we are, his personal agents or something? If he wants to employ me he can. In fact, that's a damned good idea.

6.

GLEN'S HOTEL ROOM.

GLEN: Just as I was dozing off that night, limp with relief at being alone again, and thinking of Luigi, the way he trudges up the hill with the copper-sulphate spray on his back, his clothes sprayed a bright blue, the phone rang. It took me some time to come to myself. (We hear phone ringing) Hulloo, hulloo?

VOICE OF LOUISE (over the speakers) Hullo, bad boy. I'm with your boss. He's trying to seduce me.

GLEN: Is that Mrs Grigg?

LOUISE: Call me Lou. Listen, I hope you weren't too cut up this morning. I was listening on the bedroom line. He flew to Paris this afternoon, thank God. Lecturing to NATO. He calls it the North Atlantic Treason Organisation.

GLEN (sleepily) He does?

LOUISE: You're quite a couple of boys, you and Palermo, aren't you? You know, the thing that got dad's goat was that bit about how he studied at Stanford University. He thought nobody knew.

GLEN: What's wrong with that?

LOUISE: He looks down on that university. His friends are Harvard men at the least. Listen, will you tell me one thing, how you fell into this kind of work?

GLEN: That's what your husband wanted to know. I----

LOUISE: You know, Johnny Palermo says you have about the wickedest tongue in Fleet Street.

GLEN: He said that?

LOUISE: And yet you wouldn't think it to look at you. You look as if you'd just come from the country, growing corn or something.

GLEN: That's not far wrong either.

LOUISE: And, listen, if you've got a wife and child how is it you live in a hotel? Palermo raised that one. Excuse the familiarity but you started the habit, kid.

GLEN: And with that she rang off. (He falls asleep) I woke up wonderfully early, with bright sunshine coming through the windows. The maid brought my ~~tray~~ tray in.

MAID enters, with tray.

MAID: Nice morning.

GLEN: That's right.

MAID: Getting steamed up for your exercises?

GLEN: Yes.

MAID: Like to see the paper?

GLEN (as she hands it to him) Thanks.

She leaves.

GLEN: I turned the pages over and came to a column called Hit Lines of the Week. It was some sort of a gossip column. Then I saw a little paragraph, 'Professor Jefferson Grigg, at present using England as a launching pad for a series of lectures in seven European countries, is in the news again. Sid Said his wife Louise, 'Jeff flew to Paris this afternoon. He's lecturing to NATO.' She added with a husky laugh, 'He calls it the North Atlantic Treason Organisation.' Here! (Dials frantically) Oh, no, you don't! Hullo, hullo---!

PALERMO (over the speakers) Hullo?

GLEN: Oh, I'm lucky you come in so early because I can spit in your ear---

PALERMO: What's that? And who is it?

GLEN: It's the man you're trying to fix up with enemies--- listen I've just seen that bit in the papers about Grigg---what is it (frantically peering)?---Hit Lines of the Week---and you've put down exactly what she said to me last night over the phone, it couldn't have been more than eight hours ago---and she said you said I had the wickedest tongue in Fleet Street, well, I've never worked in Fleet Street, and I'll tell you what you can do with your job---

PALERMO: Yes?

GLEN: Not that it's a job at all.

PALERMO: Exactly. But I tell you what I'm going to do, I'm putting you on a contract today, and fifty pounds is yours on signature. I'm satisfied with your work, Glen.

GLEN: What?

PALERMO: Anyway, that man loves every word we say about him. People give their right hands for an attack in the papers these days. I know a hundred starlets craving to be smeared. No, Glen, you've done a good job of work and don't have to blame yourself. With you looking innocent, and me painting you black, why, that fascinates people. Call in for that contract. (He hangs up)

A bare attic room.

GLEN:

Well, I got my contract, though he denied ever having said it. All it did was stipulate that I was entitled to full commission, so it was valueless. And I got twenty five pounds instead of fifty. But it saved me. I told him I couldn't afford to stay in a hotel any more and he said I could move in upstairs. There was an attic room above the office, without furniture. So I did, the day after, a bleak Sunday. Not a stick of furniture. No light. A wire hanging from the ceiling, that's all. I dragged up a chair from the office, as a bed. For bedclothes I used my overcoat, with a towel round my head (he puts these on). It had started raining and I watched the water running down the windows, while the street lamps gave me a lot of light. Not a car passed in two hours. (He is in the chair) Not a sound from the other houses: more offices, probably. I woke up cold after midnight. ~~Went~~ Went with my eyes closed (he does it) to get more clothes (opens cases on the floor), and pulled out two more suits and all the shirts I could find. And piled these on top of me (does so). That was better. I dreamed about my wine being sour because of a frost in the heat of summer. I heard a sharp noise below (jumps), was suddenly in a sitting position, my heart beating fast and my mouth open. Something had fallen. Perhaps somebody. I waited, staring into the darkness. Sound of a chair being screeped across the floor downstairs (we hear it). And the sound of steps---I hoped against hope they weren't coming upstairs. I leaned forward, ready to spring. But silence again. I decided to see for myself. I tiptoed outside and saw there was a light below (light appears at exit). I heard whispering and this made me bolder. I walked on down and heard Palermo cough. I could have laughed with relief. But when he saw me someone shrieked (woman shrieks), and all at once I had a confused picture of Mrs Grigg pulling her blouse up quickly, sitting on his desk, and he leaping away as if he'd been shot. And they remained ~~there~~ there, staring at me, while I stared at them. I realised I must make a surprising picture too, with the towel wrapped round my head. I went back upstairs. And after a time (again in his chair) I heard them tiptoe down the stairs. When I woke next morning there were cheerful Monday morning sounds---trucks being unloaded, the click of heels on their way to work. I decided to buy some furniture, (raising himself painfully) above all a bed.

8.

A furniture shop.

GLEN: Two doors away I found a second-hand furniture shop. It seemed to be my lucky part of town. The door made a loud cling when I went in (we hear this). And a man appeared. He had a white starched collar on but no jacket, and a flushed, wide face. He laid a fat hand on one of the bedsteads.

MR PARSONS has appeared.

PARSONS: Well, sir?

GLEN: I'd like a bed. May be a chest of drawers if you've got one, nothing grand.

PARSONS: What's that, please?

GLEN: A bed.

PARSONS: A bed? Oh, blimey. Now, a bed. There's this.

GLEN: Yes, that's the idea.

PARSONS: You'll need a mattress.

GLEN: Have you got a second-hand one?

PARSONS: No, we don't do that any more, mate. It's not hygienic, if you follow me.

GLEN: I'll have to buy a new one, do you think?

PARSONS: Well, you'd be well advised to. I mean, in a city like this our little hopping friends thrive, don't they?

GLEN: I only want it for a few weeks, perhaps months.

PARSONS: I see. I might be able to lay my hands on something if it's only for a few weeks.

GLEN: You mean you'd want it back?

PARSONS: No, mate, that wouldn't do, would it? What I mean is, if it don't have to be special I think I can suit you. It'll be clean if used, as the actress said to the bishop. Yes, it won't be this week though.

GLEN: I need it today.

PARSONS: You an actor?

GLEN: No, I'm here on business---and everythin'<sup>g</sup>'s a rush.

PARSONS: I was going to say, I get actors sometimes. Free tickets have come to me that way. They want bits and pieces for their digs. And then they try to sell them back. Very unhygienic, some of 'em. But being sympathetic to the art I give 'em a good price, more than I can afford.

GLEN: So can we get the mattress today?

PARSONS: I'll phone my dumb friend in Nightingale Lane and he might be able to drive something over.

GLEN: Would it cost a lot?

PARSONS: I could do you divan and mattress for fourteen quid and that's more or less letting it go for the fun of it.

GLEN: I can't afford fourteen.

PARSONS: Well, ~~it~~ I might knock off a little bit but it won't be less than twelve.

GLEN: What about ten?

PARSONS: I'll tell you what, give me eleven pounds down now and I'll deliver the lot by four this afternoon.

GLEN: I can give you five deposit.

PARSONS: And what about the rest?

GLEN: The firm'll pay. Two doors down.

PARSONS: Then it'll have to be twelve. I'm lenient with individuals but firms have no faces, as I always say. All right, then, let's see the colour of your money. (GLEN takes out five pounds) Do you smoke?

GLEN: No.

PARSONS: Not this? (Showing a small envelope) You never know when clients want a puff, it may be their hour of need. Where you from, the north?

GLEN: No, Italy.

PARSONS: There's many must be in need in Italy, mate. Going back some time?

GLEN: Yes.

PARSONS: Write me down your address, mate.

GLEN (as PARSONS pushes piece of paper towards him) Where, Italy do you mean?

PARSONS: No, here. You said you wanted a bed, eh?

GLEN: Yes. (Writing)

PARSONS (dialling) I'll phone my dumb friend. Hullo, is that you? There's a young man just come in, he wants to put in an order, five hundred rubber preventives with zips on. That's right, mate. Listen, Arthur, get me out one of them mattresses, have it round here by twelve noon, mate. (Hangs up) He's had a nasty life, Arthur. Seaman. Hates and loathes the sea. Had his tongue cut out---got on the wrong side in a row one night in Malaya. He never talks about it. For obvious reasons. Listen, I don't like to let an intelligent man slip through my fingers, I'll give you bed and mattress for five quid if you'll come back and see me before you go to Italy.

GLEN: All right.

PARSONS: Don't let me down, though.

GLEN: You can't give me a chest of drawers for say another five quid, can you, just to complete the deal?

PARSONS: Here, you're trying to sell my soul. All right, I'll tell you what, I'll rake out a little chest of drawers, I was keeping it for a piecan who likes two hundred years of grime in his furniture, I'll send it round with the rest.

GLEN: What's the price?

PARSONS: Just you come round and see me before you go to Italy, mate.

GLEN: And after saying that he turned round and went back to his dark little room.

The Attic Room.

GLEN: In the afternoon it all arrived. Meanwhile I'd bought some blankets, that was what I needed the rest of my money for. When the chest of drawers stood against the wall with the light from the window on it, humble and mellow, it made me think of civilisation as if it was another life.

Muriel comes in.

MURIEL: There's a letter for you.

GLEN: It's a Cambridge post mark. I don't want to open it--- (handing it back) it's only insults! You open it.

MURIEL: All right. Blimey. It's a cheque for three hundred smackers. Look!

GLEN: What? Who's it made out to?

MURIEL: You.

GLEN: Me?

MURIEL: And there's a letter. That's private.

GLEN (reading it) 'I've found out the most generous rates for a syndicated article and I hope this refunds you for any loss of copy on my account. Please forget what you saw in the office last night. For God's sake take this and don't be squeamish, not that I exactly associate squeamishness with you. I shall return the cheque again and again to you if you refuse it, I implore you to tear up this letter. I never knew I could get so panicky but if Jeff finds out about this I'm finished, he'll fix me for good, he'll rid me of every friend I have in the States. I don't know if this makes you feel powerful but I hope you have a little Christian feeling. If this cheque is all wrong, I mean if you want something else, let me know. Yours, Louise Grigg.' Here---give me that---I'll tear them both up!

MURIEL: Look out! Oh, lord above, he's torn up three hundred quid.

GLEN: Squeamish, I like that!

MURIEL: Now what did you do that for?

GLEN: It was dirty money, that's why.

MURIEL: So is all money, duck.

GLEN: She can have all the affairs she likes without paying me.

MURIEL: Oh, well. He'll take it, if you don't.

GLEN: Who will?

MURIEL (going out) Who do you think?

PALERMO (off) Glen! What the hell have you got up there, a woman?

MURIEL (also off) It's me.

PALERMO (off) Oh, that's different.

PALERMO enters.

PALERMO: Well, you've got quite a little palace here. Listen, Glen, I'll trade you this room rent free for a little favour. Cambridge tonight.

GLEN: Cambridge tonight, what do you mean?

PALERMO: The thing is I'm a little scared of Grigg, he's just returned to England---

GLEN: I'm scared of him too!

PALERMO: And he's invited you to a party.

GLEN: What?

PALERMO: Tonight. I arranged it. Well, she did. I've gone rather deep with Lou---as you saw, Glen. Be a good chap. The position is this---I think we should all come together, like a family---

GLEN: Oh, no!

PALERMO: I don't want him to feel out in the cold, you see, Glen. I mean, you seem to know how to grease rusty joints.

GLEN: Me?

PALERMO: He likes you, apparently. He enjoyed the story. Naturally, I'm letting him think it was <sup>you</sup> who wrote it. I keep pushing you down Lou's throat as a dangerous mind, and someone to woo.

GLEN: Thanks!

PALERMO: They'll both eat out of your hand. Anyway, for God's sake get up there and show him we're not really enemies.

Explain it all.

GLEN: All right, I'll go.

PALERMO: Dark suit, begins at eight, arrive at nine.

PALERMO leaves.

GLEN: I was in the train soon after seven, with a dark suit on. Two nights in the role of bedclothes hadn't done the suit any good but Muriel had an iron downstairs. I was excited. So much so that the ends of my fingers were trembling. Country lights, dim and pin-pointed, shone through the filth of the train windows. A drizzle started and swept against them---strange that a wind should start up now. At Cambridge it nearly wrenched the compartment door out of my hand. Long cars were parked outside the apartment block. A dustbin lid flew off somewhere.

10.

The GRIGG apartment.

GLEN: I pressed the bell (it rings) and there was Louise Grigg suddenly before me, in a chiffon dress slung low at the neck and her arms bare. She was flushed slightly and her eyes were brighter perhaps than I'd seen them before. A look of fear, the smallest of twitches, went through her face when she saw me. Then her expression settled for a kind of smiling self-restraint, not friendly at all.

LOUISE GRIGG has appeared.

LOUISE: Like to hang your coat, Glen? Just stroll in. Some wind tonight, eh?

GLEN: And how.

LOUISE: There's a man who brings the drinks. With white gloves.

She goes off again with his coat.

GLEN: I looked through to the other room. A pleasant, soft light came from there (we see this). One or two heads were shaved. One of them belonged to an army man in

a uniform that made him look menacingly clean, as if he was trying to answer an accusation of filth. The women were pretty. There was a roar of male laughter (we hear this) and I noticed a flushed plump man raise his eyes and, laughing with the rest, say---in an English voice---

VOICE (off) I couldn't agree more! I absolutely couldn't!

GLEN: Then the waiter with the white gloves came.

WAITER enters.

WAITER: Drink, sir?

GLEN: Thanks.

WAITER: Whisky or dry Martini: no sherry, they like their liquor hard. You English?

GLEN: Yes.

WAITER: Thought so. Well, wait for it. You're going to see something tonight.

He leaves again.

GLEN: The doorbell rang (we hear this) and a new group arrived, Louise giving them a sort of loud family welcome, much more than she'd given me. And one of the pretty women came in with a tray of sandwiches.

MYRA enters.

GLEN: Her dress was the darkest in the room with slightly old-fashioned flounced sleeves. Her hair was dark too, and in the dimness---I realised how low the lights were--- it framed her pale face like black satin. She reminded me of a Holbein sketch of one of the Tudors.

MYRA: Like one?

GLEN: No, thanks.

MYRA: I'm in fashion. Name's Myra. What are you?---forgive me asking but I have to single you out from the nuclear nuts.

GLEN: I'm in wine.

MYRA: In what?

GLEN: Wine.

MYRA: Well, listen to that. Are you drunk most of the time?

GLEN: No.

MYRA: Well, why not?

LOUISE comes in.

LOUISE: Well, how are you two making out? Jeff just arrived.

MYRA: He's in wine. Now isn't that something?

LOUISE: Oh, is that what he told you?

GLEN: A side you don't know about.

LOUISE: There's a whole lot I don't know about you, I dare say. Well, well, you're in wine now, are you? I'll go look after my guests, they're cascading in.

She leaves.

MYRA: You know when I drink this stuff I get hallucinations. I see people as all kinds of things.

GLEN: You do?

MYRA: What did you say your name was?

GLEN: I didn't. It's Glen, anyway.

MYRA: Listen, Glen, you see that General through there, with the uniform? Name of Heeley. Nicest guy on earth. Says his wife went to the top of Eiffel tower and tried to go throw her two babies off, and they shipped her over to one of the nicest hatches in the state of California. I screamed with laughter.

GLEN: Why?

MYRA: Well, isn't it funny? To go through the trouble of having babies and then throw them off the Eiffel tower? Anyway, didn't you know this man has orders to gas all wine merchants in Europe in the event of a nuclear catastrophe? (She slips off her shoes) Well, here we go. Look at that, Glen---my first hallucination.

She goes, shoeless.

GLEN: She meant Jefferson Grigg, who had just walked into the other room. He shook hands with almost everyone except the General. Or perhaps they're very old friends. The room was getting hotter and hotter. Grigg seemed to have grown taller during his journey, his stride was more loping and authoritative. The creases of his face, like reckless pencil lines, seemed deeper. And he was tired. When he saw me he didn't bat an eyelid.

even

I began to suspect a trap: he was being too nice.

GRIGG appears.

GRIGG: Glad you could come. Bring your wife this time?

GLEN: No, she's miles away.

GRIGG: But you're happily married?

GLEN: Yes.

GRIGG: I wish I was happily married like that. Perhaps it's the only way, never see 'em.

Louise comes in.

LOUISE: Why don't you two take your jackets off?

GRIGG: A good idea at that. Peel it off, Glen. We're informal here.

GLEN: It's certainly hot.

LOUISE goes again, addressing the other room with:

LOUISE (off) Well, doesn't this look cosy.

GLEN: How did your lectures go?

GRIGG: Oh, you know how it is. They just goggled. Chromosome damage, alpha radiation, CNS---they know nothing. They can't tell ~~exkighted match~~ the difference between fifteen megatons and a lighted match.

GLEN: They would if one went off, I expect.

GRIGG: You're damned right. And the sooner they face up the better, or it's going to be an awful mess.

GLEN: What was that you said, 'CNS'?

GRIGG: Why, he's learning! Central Nervous System Syndrome. You lose control over your limbs, get very excited, have difficulty breathing, sort of black out now and then, and you're dead in say eight to ten hours.

GLEN: Sounds a nasty experience.

GRIGG: See that guy through there? The one bristling with medals. He won't take his jacket off. Chocolate soldier. Name of Heeley, General Heeley. We like to get rid of him and his butler early on. It's his butler, by the way. He wouldn't dirty his hands with

nuclear tools, not him. He thinks he's in a tradition, the crumb. He even rides a horse. What say to another drink, Glen?

GLEN: Thanks.

GRIGG: And take that waistcoat off, you'll fry. I'll put your stuff in the sack.

GLEN: The what?

But GRIGG has gone.

GLEN: No wonder most of the men had taken their jackets off, and the women had kicked off their shoes---it was getting like a furnace. Only the General had his still on, and he was getting up to leave.

GRIGG appears again.

GRIGG: Whisky and soda, am I right?

GLEN: Yes.

GRIGG: OK, pour it down, foul-mouth. But try and publish the details of this party and, oh, boy---! Even your boss won't own you.

GLEN: Listen, about all that ----

GRIGG: Oh, no, don't give me phoney confessions as well, I'm not that gullible. Listen, Louise sold me the line that I admire you for your shere damned neck, so let's leave it at that.

GLEN: Here, look, that chap's taken his trousers off.

GRIGG: The General must have gone. (Calling out) How goes it, Charles?

GLEN: Is he English?

GRIGG: Owns this flat, as a matter of fact. One of your defence men. And a friend of mine---got it?

~~GRIGG~~x You don't have to worry about me remembering any of this, I'm drunk.

GRIGG: I guess I'd better put the heating up.

GLEN: You mean down.

GRIGG: You've still got your shoes on. Take 'em off!

He leaves.

XXXXXX

GLEN: I untied my shoelaces, when I could find them.  
(Does this) Started humming. Not only was the place  
hot enough from the central heating but I could see Louise  
Grigg piling logs on a fire. When sparks flew up the chimney she and the woman called Myra seemed to think it a special joke. But none of the other guests seemed worried. They couldn't all be in a plot, like people in a dream. More clothes were coming off. One woman made no bones about taking off her stockings. /see

GRIGG comes back.

GRIGG: Here's your number tag. (Hands him tag with string)  
You're number 49.

GLEN: 49?

GRIGG: Go on, the sacks are through there.

GLEN: Sacks?

GRIGG (gulping down his drink) Sacks, sacks. Put your clothes in them. And these are Myra's shoes. That's her, a lovely etching outside and a mess in. Put 'em in number 23, she always takes that one.

GLEN leaves with shoes.

GLEN (off) Here, you mean?

GRIGG: That's right. You know, I really do like you---  
(as GLEN returns) you're such a damned crook I think you've made hell your home as thoroughly as I have. You can look so damned ~~xxxx~~ innocent. Here, damn it, can you read my number?... I need glasses.

GLEN: Thirty-seven.

Grigg: Yeah, well I'm usually in the thirties.

GLEN: Those sacks (as GRIGG takes his own shoes out) are filling up fast.

GRIGG (off) Son-of-a-bitch if somebody hasn't put his shoes in mine---a pair of damn big boots. Out you get (sound of heavy shoes tumbling). That kind of thing takes a whole night to work out, it's like a running sore, people just won't think (as he appears again).

GLEN: What's all this for?

GRIGG: Oh, come on, Glen. Let's have your shirt.

GLEN: Shirt? You've already got my jacket and my waistcoat.

GRIGG: Waistcoat? You mean vest.

GLEN: I've got my vest on under my shirt.

GRIGG: Yeah, and I got an overcoat under my pants.

They reel about, taking off their clothes.

LOUSIE comes in.

LOUISE: Well, I never thought I'd see you two playing club pals.

GRIGG: These English people insist on calling their vests waistcoats, and he starts telling me he's wearing his waistcoat under his shirt.

LOUISE: They're screaming for us, Jeff (as she leaves again).

GRIGG: I'll be right in. Though they ain't screaming very loud, are they? (with a wink at GLEN) Gimme your gear, son---49, right?

GLEN: That's right. (GRIGG leaves) I was as naked as I intended to get. I mean, I didn't know these people. I was astonished when Grigg and Louise walked into the other room stripped of every shred of clothing, and everybody made a wild sort of cry (we hear this). No wonder the lights were so low. Other people started following their example. The Englishman was already down to his socks only. He had a very big belly. But it didn't seem to matter. It was nice, really. What I mean is it seemed natural. You could hear the soles of their feet brush on the carpet, and their breathing, and sometimes a slight stamp of a heel, or the smack of one of their hands on a buttock or thigh. You could see that these people had the ease that comes with power. They reminded me of English brigadiers and corps commanders during the last years of colonial India, when the sun had not quite set in their faces, and the investments were still showing a yield, and a pleasant, ungrudging magnanimity soothed and shone its way into their cheeks. I remembered how they lit their cigarettes, stood in messes drinking their tea, the comfortable drone of their voices, and these same unashamed almost feminine movements. They were exactly like the Englishman of yesterday---the Englishman of a certain class. They even dressed like him, much more than we did ourselves. They spoke with the same casual awareness of great power. Even an

American accent was barely perceptible. Like the Englishman of yesterday, he was suave, fair-minded, self-assured in manner if not in fact: a new race of imperial gentlemen. No wonder this Englishman agreed with them so well, and laughed when they laughed, in a seventh heaven of nostalgia. For me he was played-out: I could see the dead ideas playing in his face, as I could hear them in his voice. For me he was hardly an Englishman at all. But for these Americans he was what they meant by English. And this made his voice a shade more harsh and downright than it would have been with his own native kind, among whom he had lost caste long ago: he was basking in an empire again, and he seemed to realise that he preferred it to his own country and certainly to most of his own countrymen. In fact, I think that was what stopped me going into the other room: his presence, alone. I was a fellow-Englishman of the kind he had never wanted to know. So I let him bask, rocked in the feeling that he was the only Englishman present. He had more contact with these foreigners than he could ever have with me. And I realised I could say the same: I had more contact with them, they were closer to my ways of reasoning, than he. Which gave them great power---over a divided world. Yet the power, like the casual self-assurance, was a mask: perhaps that was why they threw it off after dark, and got down to grass-roots, which were death and anguish, with their beaming English clown in tow, playing the Englishman of yesterday for all he was worth, though he did it less well than his hosts. An old-world decorum still hung over them all: when they left the room they slipped an overcoat or dressing gown over their nakedness.

MYRA enters in a dressing gown.

MYRA: Have you an idea of my number, honey?

GLEN: I think it's 23.

MYRA: A problem---where to keep a handkerchief with no clothes on.

She leaves.

GLEN: Sometimes I thought I saw dawn peeping through the curtains, but it always turned out to be light reflected from the dying log fire. I heard someone

murmur 'Food' and there was a bustle towards the door. Louise appeared, looking more like a girl, her hair untidy.

LOUISE enters, also in a dressing gown.

LOUISE: Mind if I sit down? Couldn't quite make it, huh?

GLEN: Make what?

LOUISE: You still have some clothes on.

GLEN: I was---watching...

LOUISE: There's not once card the devil ever offered you that you haven't played, is there? No wonder you won't show us your naked flesh. I realised, by the way, that you procured me for Palermo. You were dead right: my legs went weak the minute I clapped eyes on him.

GLEN: What?

LOUISE: He got a neat description of me when you got back to town---he told me that---

GLEN: All I said was yes!

To P. 36.

LOUISE: I'll tell you what happened. He looked at you with a leer in his eyes and you nodded. Because you're in cahoots, the two of you. But he's the better man. He does something. He doesn't just watch. Oh, I know you're playing at these things. We thought you'd make a friend at first. Fine thing we got ourselves into. Frankly, you scare me. Not because you look scarey, but because you don't. That's why it's so uncanny. Why not procure for yourself?

GLEN: What?

LOUISE (coming closer to him) Listen, Glen, I just don't believe a man can give up being good. I don't think it's possible. For one thing, my religion doesn't allow me to.

GLEN: Nor does mine.

LOUISE: God in heaven, you're not Catholic, are you? Glen, go and find a priest, I can take you round to our little church in the morning---take communion! I mean, don't you ever?

GLEN: What?

LOUISE: Confess?

GLEN: To a priest? I haven't done, no.

LOUISE: Darling, you look so miserable. I'm not going to let you be damned. Jeff even wouldn't want me to.

GLEN: God's the judge of that.

LOUISE: You think we've got no power at all? I'll show you that isn't true! I might save you---I'm weak and stupid but I could have a try! (She sits on his lap) A woman's softness could do it. That might be one weakness you've overlooked---every man is born of woman.

They murmur and coo and fondle.

LOUISE: You refused the cheque, didn't you?

GLEN: Yes.

LOUISE (kissing him) Why? Do you want more?

GLEN: I'm not interested in cash.

LOUISE: Darling, you'll be good, won't you? Don't let Jeff hear a thing--- I'm going to soften you, you can't be hard all the way through! (Kisses him again) Is that your trouble, Glen?

GLEN: What?

LOUISE: You aren't married, are you, darling?

GLEN: What are you talking about?

LOUISE: I won't give up though.

GRIGG comes in.

GRIGG: Comfortable?

LOUISE: Jeff! Jeff... Take it easy.

GRIGG: Am I too early or too late?

LOUISE: I haven't done anything!

GRIGG: I knew it was this one or Palermo. Tell you the truth, I thought this one was too normal for your tastes. Why, you dirty son-of-a-bitch---

LOUISE: Jeff!

GRIGG: ---lowdown, two-timing male whore...

He disappears for a moment.

LOUISE: Jeff!

GRIGG (reappearing with sack number 49, empty, in his hand) I'll teach you to pull the wool over my eyes, I'll pull this over yours!

He grabs GLEN and, forcing him back into his chair, puts the sack over his head and with a neat movement ties the strings to the back of the chair in such a way that GLEN's arms are bound too.

GRIGG: Now try and get out of that. (GLEN struggles) Come on, get back to the nature room.

He pushes LOUISE out. GLEN is alone again.

GLEN: Don't you touch me! (Kicks) Hear what I said?  
Don't you come near! (Kicks) Louise! (Listens)  
Are you still here? (Suddenly spins round chair as if enemy behind) They haven't left me like this, have they?  
Grigg! Louise! (Struggles to get free)

MYRA comes in.

MYRA (staring) Oh, no! No... That's the worst yet!

She flees.

GLEN: Hullo, hullo? Was that somebody? They must be able to see me through there. Grigg! Here, he must have opened a door---I'll freeze to death! Grigg! I don't know, people are irresponsible nowadays. They must be able to see me. They can't think this is normal.  
(Tries to untie himself) What's he done? Grigg! God, what a fool I was to come up here. That Palermo, I'll give him something tomorrow morning. God, it's cold. I suppose I just wait. But I'll freeze to death.  
(kicks again, struggles)

LOUISE appears.

LOUISE: OK, cool off.

GLEN (as she unties him) Cool off---I'm frozen! You got me into a nice fix, didn't you?

LOUISE: Gee, I'm sorry.

GLEN: I bet you're not.

GRIGG comes in with a bottle of wine, and one glass.

GRIGG: Kind of a misunderstanding. Here, get this down. From Charles's cellar.

LOUISE: Feeling OK now, honey? (To GRIGG)

GRIGG: I think I'll throw myself down somewhere. I'm beat.

LOUISE: The spare room's clear, honey.

GRIGG: Kill that bottle, Glen! (as he goes off)

GLEN: How did you do it?

LOUISE: Oh, I softened him up. Anyway, that's enough of trying to save people. As from tonight.

GLEN: He didn't beat you?

LOUISE: What, him? I'd like to see him try. He made me swear on a bible.

GLEN: What?

LOUISE: That it wasn't you. Thank God he didn't make me swear about Palermo, that's all.

GLEN: Where are the guests?

LOUISE: Most of 'em are asleep

LOUISE: Mostly asleep. I think that's what Lou means to do too. Good night, we'll be meeting in a day from now.

GLEN: Where?

LOUISE (going) Ask your boss. He phoned up Jeff and arranged it. I don't know how he does it.

GLEN: Good night. I sat there for some time, stretched, yawned, got up. Went to find the contents of number 49 (disappears for a moment), and began dressing. Then I walked into the big room. There were sleepers everywhere. They had all been lovingly covered with coats or blankets, like children, mute and pale, seeming to stare at me behind their closed eyelids. I saw Myra, her head slumped forward, twitching.

11.

The Backs.

GLEN: Outside, I found a morning so serene that I stood where I was between the gilt swing-doors and the long, grimed, official cars, my hands in my pockets, just looking at the sky. The wind had done its cleansing job and there were only the last fine traces of cloud high up. No one was about. An electric milk-trolley throbbed from a nearby street, a suburban sound that made me want to laugh. I walked towards the Backs, it being too early for a café to be open. The colleges were still and closed, their windows reflecting the first watery yellow of the sun. The touch of the chill air, the sun that bore into everything like a diamond, the silence I found when I reached the river were like judgements on the night I'd had, but I couldn't tell what they were. The birds were awake on the river and all at once three swans throbbed with a happy will overhead, tracing the riverline precisely, gleaming in the sun, their wing-beats echoing on the water. I sat down on a bench and looked across at King's chapel, vast and as always so fixed against the sky that it wasn't ours any more, but past and future. The river moving slowly between the lawns reminded me of English summer afternoons long ago. The Bridge of Sighs looked as if

it enclosed watchers from the past. But---there didn't seem any connecting links any more. Not with those summer afternoons I could remember vividly, not even with the scene that lay before me. It was like a painted scene. After the night I'd just had it didn't seem real. Strange that Grigg's thoughts should steal into my head now, like a threat, and viciously true. We were marking time, yes, waiting. And England, I was in England: but what England existed now, even in this most English scene? It was like a memory. Nature was like a memory: it had all been broken underneath, from the swans to the bright lawns stirring in the sunshine; in one moment it could all collapse---perhaps was collapsing invisibly at this moment. Which made it all a pleasant memory at best. As an ugly town was an unpleasant memory at best. We were watching the careful fruits of past generations, and the careful fruits of God: we were the first spectators, because the key to its total destruction had been found. Look at this soaring chapel, pointing up far beyond us into the past and future. But what future? We couldn't secure about a future. So it sealed us into ourselves. The future wasn't ours. So there could be no past, either. We had no future because we had no power to form it. It was being decided by other minds, for motives we knew nothing about. We had lost the power of choice. So we were like unwanted guests in the universe. A gardener cycled along the gravel path in front of me---

A gardener cycles past.

GLEN: at least he looked like a gardener, and said a ringing---

GARDENER: Good morning!

GLEN: Good morning! And at once my thoughts were behind me. I was lost again in the business of life. Just a ringing good morning could do it. It didn't take much to pull the wool over our eyes. A few windows opened. There was the sound of cars from King's Parade. And a church bell started, followed by others. This most demanding of all sounds reinforced the walls and lawn and soaring stone, and insisted on past and future being intact, and I gave in happily and willingly, and let the false dream suffuse me. (Bells) I got up, my hands in my pockets, and strolled over the bridge again. I was hungry.

We hear the bells of Cambridge.

Palermo's office.

GLEN: That night had another strange effect. It happened when I was walking across King's Cross station on my way to the office. All of a sudden I felt as if I'd been implicated in something---not a crime but something, which I mustn't talk about. And it wasn't just one thing. In a formidable way I was prevented from talking openly about anything, as if all my life now lay under a veil of secrecy. And I began to feel watched. Put more precisely, I began to feel watchable. I felt not quite clear in my record. Something was on my record which I didn't know about. I had to be careful, I mustn't speak, but exactly what the forbidden subjects were I didn't know, so they could well be everything. I was involved. Yet I'd done nothing. I had been made an ally, but for what I didn't know. The veil spread by the previous night lay over all secrets, including the most terrible ones, which were whether a machine of total destruction had been invented, and where it was, and who controlled the button, and then who controlled those who controlled the button, in a series of secrets that reached down finally to me, who had no importance at all, and who tried to live as if there were logic and plain facts still. But how or why this was so I couldn't say: only that the night's experience, showing me bulging hairy parts and strong shining bosoms and hips fruitful of suggestions and legs curling affectionately over others and hot skin touching other skin with thrilling unconcern, exposed with its very unsecrecy the deadly secrecy on which our life was founded now. You know, after a night like that, you come to the core and germ of the world. I had touched its secret: which was that all modern life was a kind of secret service. And I was involved. The thought made me shudder. I felt pale and could hardly walk. My cheeks drooped and I couldn't look other people in the eye. I shuffled through to Palermo's office. He was there, in a spotlessly white shirt that made his hands look frail, his lips fastidiously soft. He looked up slowly.

PALERMO: Thanks, by the way.

GLEN: What for?

PALERMO: Winning dad over. All-night session? She phoned me just now. Asked for you too.

GLEN: Why?

PALERMO: Anyway, thanks. You'll hold my hand tonight, eh?

GLEN: I'm not going to any parties. I've had enough of them.

PALERMO: Just a gathering at my club. Not a party. Call it work. And I'll need you for something else, in an hour from now.

GLEN: What?

PALERMO: Oh, a conference. I'm on to something good. Meanwhile get some sleep. By the way, I opened an account for you today. Put three hundred quid in.

GLEN: What?

PALERMO: It's the bank we use. Bank charges fall on us.

GLEN: What three hundred<sup>n</sup> is that, for God's sake?

PALERMO: The advance I told you about.

GLEN: But that was twenty-five.

PALERMO: We thought you were worth more.

GLEN: Who's we?

PALERMO: Chandler Williams and me. Why, want me to take it back?

GLEN: No. Well, thank you very much.

PALERMO: I'm under the weather too. Ticker. I'm saving myself up for tonight. Great things. The universe is going to move. In fact, if you don't mind, I'll use your bed upstairs.

GLEN: I helped him up from his desk. Then he was all right. He walked upstairs very slowly---I felt he didn't want Muriel to see. He came down an hour later looking fresh and spruce for the conference, and hustled me into a taxi outside. It was an office behind the Strand. Selsey Associates was written on the door. I don't think I understood one word of what went on. Two men were there, one called Selsey and the other Percy Klydonhall. When the receptionist said that Mr Selsey was engaged with Mr Klydonhall at the moment

Palermo made an amazed whew under his breath and looked down at his suit, straightened his cuffs. This Klydonhall kept to the background all the time. He was one of those men who might be any age, and would be all his life. Perhaps because of the readiness of his smile, which sent a sparkle all through his face. And, in fact, they sometimes called him 'Junior'. At that moment a huge, beaming, red-faced fellow came out.

13.

Selsey's office.

Selsey, Klydonhall, Palermo,  
Glen are present.

GLENN: He bubbled with professional laughter, talked most of the time, went to an untidy desk and then forayed out again, rubbed his hands together and ducked his head in an odd way with a little hissing sound through his teeth.

SELSEY: Hullo, old pal, still up to your dirty tricks?

PALERMO: Oh, I've brought my stooge. Glen, this is Leonard Harcourt Selsey. Never trust a man who looks like that.

SELSEY: Not in my game, is he?

PALERMO: God, I should hope not!

SELSEY: Oh, that's all right. Don't like other dogs---always want to bite them. Professional jealousy. You know Percy Klydonhall, I suppose?

PALERMO: How do you do.

KLYDONHALL: How do you do.

SELSEY: The point about Johnny Palermo, Percy, is he's an amateur. And we need 'em still. You see, these companies with their overheads big or small can't bring people together in a simple act of fellowship.

And Johnny still can. It does depend on people in the end, don't you agree, Junior?

KLYDONHALL: Oh, absolutely.

SELSEY: Now as you know, John, we're interested. And we mustn't lose money.

PALERMO: You won't.

SELSEY: We'd better not. Now if you like to take this thing on your shoulders, OK. But it has to be faster than anything you've done before.

PALERMO: Tonight. I told you that.

SELSEY: All right, Percy?

KLYDONHALL: Fine.

SELSEY: And of course keep our names out of it until zero hour. If you can launch us safely you'll make a packet. I can promise you that.

PALERMO: You'd better.

KLYDONHALL: Shouldn't there be something written, just among ourselves?

SELSEY: Absolutely disastrous, I should have thought. If John and I start rocking the boat, we'll be in the drink, because we're in the same boat. Got me? We trust each other, don't we, John?

PALERMO: We certainly do.

SELSEY: Now I suppose most of this depends on Charles. Naturally, ~~Percy~~ <sup>we</sup> knows his work. Matter of fact, Charles and I were at school together. We never met---he was in the Lower School. He was a crack shot on the range, I seem to remember. Anyway, I just thought you ought to ~~meet~~ meet Percy beforehand. We're terribly tied up this afternoon, otherwise we would have loved to chew the fat a bit longer. By the way, I don't think your professor's had a very good deal from the press.

PALERMO: Oh, he'll get a better one.

SELSEY: I bet he will. At the club, then. Good bye.

PALERMO: Good bye.

SELSEY and KLYDONHALL leave.

PALERMO: My God, I've got to the top now, boy. I've seen him at the club, I've watched him wheel Muriel round the dance floor---

GLEN: Who?

PALERMO: Klydonhall. But I didn't know he'd actually acknowledge my existence one day. Old Selsey worked that. I knew he would, once he could see something juicy. I've been watching that pot-bellied old rat for years, trying to squeeze a really good contact out of him, and I've got it now, by God. You know, Glen, a woman always lets something drop when she isn't thinking. And Lou just dropped a name. Like a penny. 'Charles', she said. Like that.

GLEN: Charles who?

PALERMO: Dornelling. The one whose flat you were at all night.

GLEN: Oh!

PALERMO: And it clicked, to join the two together. Now that Klydonhall spends his time running between Wall Street and Threadneedle Street, some of the jobbers call him Ariel. There isn't a pie on either side of the Atlantic he hasn't got a finger in. I'm in the money. I'll make everybody green with envy. It'll eat through them, corroding their guts.

GLEN: But what's it about, exactly?

PALERMO: He's even a lord.

GLEN: Who is?

PALERMO: Klydonhall. But he doesn't use the title any more since he became American.

GLEN: What, he's an American?

PALERMO: Any objections?

GLEN: No but---everybody seems to be.

PALERMO: You'd better not harbour dark thoughts about our Percy, you know. Best not to gnaw the hand that feeds you. Take a little bite now and then, but never gnaw steadily.

GLEN: And what's Muriel got to do with him?

PALERMO: Uch! You know these girls. They get ideas after a couple of dances. Anyway, be there by seven sharp.

GLEN: Where?

PALERMO: The 1810. Get the address from Muriel. And listen, Glen. From now on we only sing paeons of praise and hymns of love for Porfessor Grigg, get it? If you know anything bad about him, keep it dark. In fact, keep your mouth shut altogether.

PALERMO leaves.

GLEN: It was a club for women as well, like most of its kind in Mayfair: fitted carpets, soft wall-lights, plushy chairs. A commissionaire stood outside, not a beefy one; his uniform and height were modest. The nod he gave you established intimacy. It was a club for deals.

14.

The 1810 Club.

PALERMO, LEONARD HARCOURT SELSEY and JACK RYAN are there. Music.

GLEN: Dancing went on in another room. Palermo and the vast, hissing Selsey were already there, also somebody called Jack who unlike everyone else was dressed in a sports jacket with a casual shirt, a sharp, bright, attentive man who switched his head quickly from one side to the other while he followed a conversation. He nodded to me pleasantly and I had an immediate desire to go over and sit by him and unload everything on my mind, God knows why. And I wanted to drink. Well, <sup>that</sup> ~~it~~ was easy. One whisky followed another quickly.

SELSEY: Old jobber Carter-Staines grumbling the other day, no bloody crises, have to engineer one, he said. If only the PM'd be caught in a tiolet soliciting, we could work a one-day crisis and have the bloody prices down, but all the sex perverts in the cabinet are in hiding.

RYAN: You're telling me.

SELSEY: I could have made a nice packet over that little bit of embarrassment last year, I had it all over the morning papers if you remember, fascinating game stock-jobbing, for those confirmed in the paths of evil.

RYAN: Well, I'm popping over to the office. See you in a jiffy.

PALERMO: OK, you rascal.

RYAN leaves. He returns briefly.

RYAN: I think these are friends of yours, aren't they?

PALERMO jumps up, and GRIGG and LOUISE enter. RYAN disappears again.

GRIGG: So there you are.

PALERMO: Come and meet Leonard Selsey. Leonard, these are the great people I've been talking about.

GRIGG: How are you, Mr Selsey?

SELSEY: Delighted. Do come and sit down.

A waiter takes LOUISE's fur wrap.

MURIEL comes in, at first unseen.

PALERMO: Waiter! Aren't you both whisky drinkers?

GRIGG: I'm afraid so.

PALERMO: Muriel, darling! Come and sit down. Professor and Mrs Grigg, this is Muriel, from my office.

WAITER returns.

PALERMO: Better bring a bottle, and soda for those who want it.

WAITER: Right.

He leaves again.

LOUISE: I'm glad you took it, honey.

GLEN: Took what?

LOUISE: The cheque.

GLEN: What cheque?

LOUISE: Didn't he put it in your bank today? Three hundred pounds?

GLEN: He said it was for---!

LOUISE: Anyway, I'm mighty relieved. Sp is Jeff.

GLEN: Why should he be?

LOUISE: You'll see. Used any of it yet?

GLEN: Yes.

~~LOUISE:~~ Fine, then it's too late to be proud.

GRIGG: Listen, I'd just as soon discuss that little project before Charles blows in, just to get a brief, if you get me.

SELSEY: I absolutely agree.

RYAN enters again and goes over to GLEN.

RYAN: I've got you a drink, old chap, like to come and, join me?

GLEN: Oh. Thanks.

They go to another table.

RYAN: You're Johnny's new acquisition.

GLEN: That's right.

RYAN: Very old friend of mine, Johnny. Matter of fact, I was with him last night, right at this table. You weren't around. He said you were asleep or something.

GLEN: No, I was at a party.

RYAN: Let me get you another one. (Motions waiter over)

GLEN: Thanks. Well, no, I was at a party, as a matter of fact.

RYAN: Ah.

GLEN: In Cambridge.

RYAN: Friends of yours? I suppose you've a lot of old acquaintances to see, coming back to England---

GLEN: The Griggs, over there---the couple.

RYAN: Oh, yes, they've taken Charlie Dornelling's place in Cambridge, haven't they?

GLEN: That's right.

RYAN: Best defence brain this country's got, outside the government. Never will go for parliament, keeps his influence with both parties that way. So, was it a nice party? I imagine so.

GLEN: It went on all night.

RYAN: What could be nicer than that?

WAITER brings their whiskies.

GLEN: Cheers. God, I'm thirsty tonight. Usually I put soda in but---

RYAN: Down the hatch. Soda corrupts a good whisky. I imagine old Grigg knows how to give a good party.

GLEN: Well, he shoots his mouth off a bit, old Jeff. You know what he's over here for, I suppose?

RYAN: Some lecture tour, isn't it?

GLEN: That's right. He said Europeans had got expendable written all over their faces, and they didn't know the difference between fifteen megatons and a lighted match. I said they would if one went off.

RYAN: You're telling me.

GLEN: He's a nice chap, really. There was some General or other there, anyway Jeff said he was a crumb, because he rides a horse.

RYAN: That wouldn't be General Heeley, would it?

GLEN: That's right. He called him a chocolate soldier.

RYAN: Go on!

GLEN: But he went early.

RYAN: Who did?

GLEN: The General. It would have got a bit hot for him, I think.

RYAN: How do you mean?

GLEN: Well, they've certainly got some central heating in that flat. Then everybody started taking their clothes

off.

RYAN: No!

GLEN: Yes, as true as I'm sitting here. You started with your shoes and he gave everybody a little number tag, and this was the number of your sack where you put your clothes. Yes, we had a ripe old night! Well, a sort of dance started up, the idea being that you couldn't join in without being starko. He and his wife started off, and I can't remember who went up then, I think it was that English chap---

RYAN: The defence brain?

GLEN: That's right. But I tell you something, it's very funny, it didn't strike you as lascivious or anything, I mean you really got to know people, you saw them as they were.

RYAN: I bet you did.

GLEN: Yes, it was an experience worth having. But when he put a sack on my head and tied me to my chair----

RYAN: No!

GLEN: You see, his wife Lou had the idea that I was always running to the press and, you know, spilling the beans about their life, it's completely ridiculous as I've never spoken to an editor in my life and apart from Palermo I've never met anybody even mildly connected with the press, but anyway she was convinced I was out for a story and she was trying ~~not~~ to persuade <sup>me</sup> not to do it, by sitting on my lap---

RYAN: Sitting on your lap?

GLEN: It's a scream, isn't it? ~~The first~~ Anyway, ~~she starts~~ there she was sitting on my ~~lap~~ <sup>lap</sup>---

RYAN: Not naked?

GLEN: Well, not quite, but there wasn't much in it. Anyway, there she was, everything quite harmless and above board, when who should come in but the old man himself and of course he jumps to the inevitable conclusion.

RYAN: Of course.

GLEN: He starts calling me a crumb like General Heeley and all of a sudden I find myself in a sack, tied to the chair I'm sitting in.

RYAN: Good God!

GLEN: Listen, you haven't heard anything yet. When she lets me out again she tells me he took her over to the family bible---they're Catholics---

RYAN: Oh, they're Catholics.

GLEN: ---and makes her swear that she's never had anything untoward with me, which she does immediately. And of course knowing she wouldn't risk hellfire just for me, he believes her. Then they're both as nice as pie and he brings out a bottle of the finest Mouton Rothschild I've ever tasted, he must have had it sitting in room temperature waiting for a thirst just like mine--- anyway, it all ended quietly, they're awfully nice people really.

RYAN: Well, that sounds quite an adventure.

GLEN: It certainly was.

RYAN (rising) Don't get up. I've got to rush. It's certainly a fantastic story. Don't worry (with a wink) I'll be in touch with you about it.

GLEN: In touch? Why?

Bbb RYAN has gone.

PALERMO comes over and sits by GLEN.

PALERMO: Listen, how many times do you sell your soul, exactly? Aren't you afraid of going into liquidation?

GLEN: What do you mean?

PALERMO: Come on, spill it. What was the big laugh, with Jack Ryan just now?

GLEN: Jack Ryan?

PALERMO: Let me tell you one thing, stories go through me, and I'll see you don't get a direct fee.

GLEN: Was that the editor, Jack Ryan, you mean?

PALERMO: Well, who the hell else? You make me sick. I'd have kicked you out this morning if you hadn't worked that Cambridge party so well.

GLEN: Worked it?

PALERMO: And for God's sake stop repeating everything I say.

GLEN: Anyway, that three hundred wasn't yours to give!

PALERMO: I'll find out wha's behind you, boy, don't worry.  
(Leaves him)

GRIGG: I like to hear your boss chew your nuts off, Glen.  
When did you leave last night, exactly?

GLEN: Just about dawn.

GRIGG: You went on the river with Charles and the rest, on  
that crazy punting party?

GLEN: No. Don't you remember me leaving?

GRIGG: Well, I had above fifty guests to think of. All I  
remember is you mauling Lou.

GLEN: I didn't touch her.

GRIGG: More fool you.

LOUISE: Is there a place to powder noses, honey?

MURIEL: I'll show you.

They go out.

GRIGG: That's a nice girl of yours, Johnny. Been telling me  
her life story. Didn't I hear she was Percy Klydonhall's  
girl of the year?

PALERMO: She could only have told you that herself.

GRIGG: Do you really get that for a syndicated article, Glen?

GLEN: Get what?

GRIGG: What was it---a thousand bucks I paid out this morning---?

PALERMO: To my mind, no man should be paid for libels.

GRIGG: Oh, come now, mighty public outrages get to the ear of the  
world through people like Glen. Eh, Glen?

GLEN: Why don't you tell him who put those articles in the  
paper?

PALERMO: I can see our guests.

He goes out.

GRIGG: Sorry I had to take a slam at you. Just couldn't let the chance slip. Notice the way Louise bridled?

PALERMO returns with PERCY  
KLYDONHALL and CHARLES DORNELLING.

GRIGG: Well, Charles, boy, how far d'you get this morning?

DORNELLING: We grounded at Caius!

PALERMO: Now, Jeff, this is Mr Klydonhall.

GRIGG: Pleased to meet you, very pleased.

KLYDONHALL: How do you do?

SELSEY: She's gone to the loo, Percy.

KLYDONHALL strolls off. The  
whisky bottle is brought into  
play.

PALERMO: Help yourself, Glen.

MURIEL returns and sits at GLEN'S  
side.

MURIEL: You shouldn't drink so much. I've been watching you.

SELSEY: The peer wanted a dance. He came in just this minute.

MURIEL: I know, I gave him the slip.

SELSEY: Silly girls, don't know which side their bread's  
battered, eh, Johnny?

MURIEL: Johnny said to me once, there are millions of suicides,  
he said---successful ones, you meet them every day,  
they did it so well there was no body, not a mark to  
be seen, and they're still walking round. I reckon  
I'm one of those.

SELSEY: Oh, come, come now.

PALERMO: Did I say that? No wonder I get to the top.

SELSEY: Well, Jeff, you've got the finest exponent of Massacre  
2 sitting at your side (indicating CHARLES DORNELLING).

GRIGG: Yes, Harcourt, there's a hell of a lot in it, I know,  
but you don't mind me saying it's redundant.

SELSEY: I do! I do! No, Jeff, I can prove it works, and  
Charles can give you book, bell and candle on it.

GRIGG: Well, whatever Charles says is gospel for me as you probably know, but in this case I'm repeating what I've heard in another place on the highest authority.

DORNELLING: What you've heard, Jeff, was about Massacre 1, unless I'm mistaken. In fact, the Under Secretary said to me about a week ago---I mean, this is off the cuff and the record, incidentally---that Massacre 1 as a weapon stank but it had been damned effective in getting us noticed in the Pentagon! I'm not sure he had the ear of the minister there but I've an idea they chewed it over a minute before I came into the room.

GRIGG: OK, I know your heart's in this, Charles, and I don't need to tell you I'm looking at it seriously all the time. But there's one thing you can't gainsay and that's that Number 2 is a tarty version of Number 1, and that's why it don't stand a ghost.

DORNELLING: Well, Jeff, I don't want to quarrel with you but that's just what it isn't. And I'll prove it to you with the blueprints tomorrow morning if you give me some of your time.

GRIGG: I'll give you all of my time you want. What about our friend Percy Klydonhall---where is he?---could he give me some of his time, to get the whole thing tied up, purse strings and all?

SELSEY: I can talk for Percy. I've been doing it for over ten years, anyway.

GRIGG: Don't tell me he knew my name.

SELSEY: Well, not only that, but he's the one man in England who's ever tried to get you taken seriously.

GRIGG: OK, what time tomorrow?

SELSEY: Ten o'clock at his office.

GRIGG: Let me know where that is (notebook in hand)?

SELSEY: We'll send a car round to your hotel.

GRIGG: OK, the Northumberland. May be we could breakfast together, first, Charles.

DORNELLING: All right.

GRIGG: Just so this young Harcourt here don't trip us up on facts when we get there.

LOUISE returns.

GRIGG (pushing the whisky bottle across) Help the girls, will you, Glen?

KLYDONHALL strolls back.

KLYDONHALL: This looks festive. Not dancing tonight, Mouse?

MURIEL: OK.

They go out together.

GRIGG: Chin-chin, milord!

DORNELLING: ...take-off, yes, but not the actual conventional energy-displacement, I mean, you've got the whole thing very nicely wrapped up in that, what the devil was that hunch of Joe Bligh's called, it was beyond the trial stage in six months and we never thought it'd get up off the ground, clever blighter that, though true enough what he has in elegance he loses in shere fussiness, I mean take his fuse arrangements.

PALERMO: It's no good without the press on your side, you can have all the techincal know-how on the earth.

GRIGG: Oh, boy, I'm glad you said that, Johnny. I'm tired of opening an English paper and getting belly ache.

SELSEY: Well, of course, you know where Jack Ryan's sympathies lie. Actually, I've always thought that commie business a bit of an affectation, myself. Couldn't be a nicer chap, in fact.

PALERMO: Jack follows public demand, he's got more noses than fingers.

GRIGG: You can't mean there's a public demand for my misery?

PALERMO: The morning editions'll be making you dance for joy soon.

GRIGG: I can't wait! Which reminds me (draws GLEN over to a separate table)

PALERMO: Be tough, Glen!

GRIGG: Oh, come on now!

GLEN: I can hardly stand up.

GRIGG: Well, sit down.

PALERMO: Dance, Mrs Grigg?

The others wander off. GLEN  
and GRIGG are alone.

GRIGG: Your boss is jumpy like a child tonight. Wouldn't you be, if you was getting the Percy Klydonhall account? (A wink) Just supposing you was interested in money, of course? You know, it seems to me I'm damned slow. Because I need a guy to look after my personal publicity too. Now wouldn't I have done better to walk straight into your office on arrival and say, here's fifty thousand bucks on account, I want a sweet press? Anyway I didn't. So I took a beating on the head. So what say, Glen? How much? / I

GLEN: How much what?

GRIGG: You're not even gentle, are you? Listen, why don't you come off your pedestal and name a price? Here, (motioning a waiter) have another drink, to help you do something really dirty.

GLEN: As a matter of fact, I don't know what you want me to do.

GRIGG: I want a story a week, and I don't mean the provincial press either.

GLEN: What kind of story?

GRIGG: Well, hell, not the kind you usually let off! So what do you say, Glen? I mean, the price. You'll do the work all right. Johnny says so.

GLEN: He did?

GRIGG: Every story goes through your own office, Glen. Mind that. Nothing direct with the papers. (Waiter brings over bottle and glasses) Thanks, Fred.

GLEN: Well, I'd like the usual newspaper rates.

GRIGG: OK, Glen. You a member of the National Union?

GLEN: Well, no.

GRIGG: Boy, are you a rat.

GLEN: I'm not really a journalist.

GRIGG: You just take their fees, eh? OK, Glen: your first assignment---give me a line on your boss. Drink up. He's after my wife, right? Come on, I know you two slimy bastards got me down here to bribe me with a Percy Klydonhall deal and drop me into bed with this whore Muriel for the night, I know you used my own friend Charlie Dornelling for the purpose, the closest

friend I ever had!

GLEN: Here, what's the matter? It's not true, you know.

GRIGG: Oh, I don't mind the truth. I'll sleep with that kid, OK. If you're walking into hell and there's no other direction, well, keep walking, that's my philosophy.

GLEN: You could turn round and walk the other way, couldn't you?<sup>To heaven?</sup>  
Take your wife back to Cambridge, go home now?

GRIGG: But I'd still be in hell. Thinking what a hell of a time I could be having with that girl, and being bored to hell by Lou. You've got to have a technique, that's all. Like playing the war-game. You've got to know when to stage an attack by an angry mob on a foreign embassy, rouse up artificial indignation, when to worry the enemy in a way that seems legitimate, when to run a bombing attack on one of your own ships or depots and then say it was the other side, so public opinion gets more scared of them than sceptical of you. There are all sorts of ways of making war without resort to the full-scale thing, Glen, and it's the same in private life. I can go a hell of a way with this boss of yours, in bribes and threats, before we're outright enemies. I've got to have a technique. And Lou's one of them.

GLEN: Your wife?

GRIGG: Sure. She's free, she's got her eyes all over his body, don't think I can't see that. So I use her. ~~And she~~  
She belongs to the technique of defence. And this one---

MURIEL comes in.

MURIEL: Like a dance, honey?

GRIGG (getting up) ---belongs on the offensive side. You'll get to understand me soon, Glen. In fact, you may become one of my best disciples. ~~yet.~~

He goes out with MURIEL.

GLEN: Well, he could have been right. I was feeling more and more part of the Grigg family. Nothing like getting money on false pretences for creating a sense of intimacy with the provider. I wasn't ashamed. I had ceased to exist. We offer our skulls, delicious sinews and nerves to the worms, who give us no receipt for what they take. And I had arrived at that state of nullity. They were all I had to give. I owed everything. Nothing could be a truer state than that: and the feeling of lightness, of having abandoned everything, was magnificent. The bump of the band was like the bump of tedium itself. Yes, I'd sold myself. Completely. At not a bad price. Chandler-Williams with his honest voice had told me the

truth. We are the waifs of time, he should have told me that; we watch and try to pray, we are in suspense, waiting for an adventure to end. By the time I got back to Maidenhead Lane the dawn had come through. Just as I turned the corner I saw Palermo with Louise Grigg on his arm walking the other way. Then when I walked up the stairs to my room I could smell her scent on the air.

15.

The attic room.

GLEN: I was about to slump down on my bed when I saw it had been slept in---made love in. And he hadn't troubled to make it again. I pulled the blankets over me, just as they were. I dreamed of a copper sun, the way it used to come up in the old Italy, as sure as birth every morning: I suppose because I'd left the light on.

He is asleep. We hear steps outside. MURIEL enters.

Before waking him she inspects a notebook of his, lying by the bed.

GLEN (waking) Hullo.

MURIEL: Sorry.

GLEN: What's the time?

MURIEL: Turned four. I didn't like Palermo's flat any more.

GLEN: Why were you there?

MURIEL: I live there.

GLEN: You live with Palermo?

MURIEL: Yes.

GLEN: Been with Grigg?

MURIEL: Yes. All I did was cry, so he went.

GLEN: Have you lived with Palermo long?

MURIEL: Well, I had to give up my digs. I used to type for him then. I was no virgin but I had a quiet life. Money started coming my way, I mean after I moved in with him, and then the typing I did was a sort of cover, for me as well. Then I did less and less typing. I got money. Ten or twenty at first. Then one day fifty. I didn't have to think of tax rebate or insurance or picking my wages up once a week. I was on air. I didn't see my mother any more. The first few cheques were from Percy. They used to come through Palermo. That made it easier to take them.

GLEN: Yes.

MURIEL: Police keep coming.

GLEN: Police?

MURIEL: I heard of a girl framed up once, she got in with the wrong people, she hanged herself.

GLEN: Don't be silly!

MURIEL: They ask me all sorts of questions, Glen---they came just now. I think they're police. Well, I can't help knowing what they say.

GLEN: Who?

MURIEL: Al<sup>l</sup> this Massacre stuff---well, I didn't really hear it---you're all in it together!

GLEN: Sssh!

MURIEL: I don't want to understand. They ask about Percy, what he says. They think I'm after something. And they don't trust Palermo. That's why he's never at home. He took me to an embassy reception once, they ask about that, well I didn't want to know anything wrong. Percy knows I went with Grigg. He didn't seem to mind. He smiled at Grigg, you know the way men have.

GLEN: You're too young for this game.

MURIEL: No. It's that I'm a fool. I thought Percy was going to marry me. I'm frightened, Glen!

GLEN: Sssh!

MURIEL: I didn't do it for money. Not the actual notes. But I suppose money's behind it. I liked the clubs and sometimes Percy took me to the Riviera, I liked

the dresses, and coming down to breakfast in the sunshine.

GLEN: Get some sleep. You can have my bed.

MURIEL: I saw your little book. I nearly screamed when I saw that word missile. I came over here for help: I thought you were the only person in the world who could help me, because we sort of work together. And you're just the same as them. But it doesn't matter, I don't care any more. When you know everything's up there's nothing to do, you just wait.

GLEN: But that's a diary I keep about the weather. I've been losing money on my wine, I thought these rockets to the moon had something to do with the funny weather, it's all changed out there in the last few years. Look, Muriel---'May, dangerous storms on coast, wind nearly hurricane force, June, people killed in fields near by with scythes in their hands, 15th a colossal cloudburst in the next town, incessant flickering lightning that illuminates the countryside like strange moonlight, 26th rain in avalanches, 28th hail suddenly ruins all my wine facing east, nearly half my yield, all over in three minutes...'

She is asleep. He covers her with blankets. He sleeps too, and their heads are side by side.

The lights fade and rise slowly again. There are heavy foot-steps on the stairs. PALERMO enters.

PALERMO: Well, well, this is cosy.

GLEN (waking) She came about four, talked about the police.

PALERMO: And somehow slipped between your sheets. She looks happy, Glen. Congratulations.

MURIEL wakes too.

PALERMO: You ran out<sup>k</sup> on Grigg last night, honey.

MURIEL: He drank himself asleep in your flat.

PALERMO: That's where I found him.

MURIEL: Nobody to believe in, nothing to happen. You know, Percy makes you feel full of hope just before he drops you in the dirt. He bounces, like last night. Whereas I don't bounce. I go down with a thump.

PALERMO: Into Glen's bed.

MURIEL: He had me hoping last night. Asked me for a dance, 'Not dancing tonight, Mouse?' I'll never understand men. They do such funny things. For money---but not even for that. I don't know why you can't be yourselves.

PALERMO: Still, Johnny Palermo loves you.

MURIEL: Better be hated by any man than liked by him. My mother said that about somebody and it fits to you. Percy took me on the Riviera for a week and made me think I was a human being. But you have to start at the bottom rung and work your way up to be a human being, and I didn't, I made a big jump because I despised the people round me.

PALERMO: Lay off the drink at night and then you won't feel like this in the morning.

MURIEL: You can talk. When you get those patches round your eyes, it's bad. I'll grab a coffee.

She goes.

PALERMO: Well, Glen, she gave me the whole works last night. I've never had anything like it. She pulled out all the stops. I thought she was going to have my blood.

GLEN: On my bed, too.

PALERMO: Where else do you think I'm going---home, with Grigg sitting there? Anyway, I pay the rent here, so don't lay yourself on <sup>too</sup> so big. Besides--- (hands him a letter). I might not cover your mistakes like I do. Go on, read it.

GLEN: 'I laughed like a drain over your story, Glen, and I'm only sorry we couldn't use more of it, but I'm sure you understand we have to watch the libel laws. Keep in touch, Yours, Jack Ryan.'

PALERMO: And a cheque for fifty quid enclosed. I could have got you double. That's why he sent it to ~~to~~ you direct.

GLEN: How the hell did I know it was Jack Ryan? Anyway, this means he won't print the story after all, doesn't it?

PALERMO: He's already printed it on the middle page. As far as I remember the headline goes 'Naked Truth at Professor's Party'. It's all there, to be read between the lines. And you're supposed to be the professor's press man, Glen.

GLEN: Has he seen it?

PALERMO: I showed it to him just now. And a good thing I did. Because I found out what poor rates he's giving you. That won't do for us, Glen. I made him double it. I said that article was your answer to his price. And he said, 'OK, he's got an expensive soul, but I'll buy it!'

GLEN: He thinks he'll buy it.

PALERMO: A soul's like love, Glen. All of a sudden it's gone, and there's iron in its place. If he starts getting rough tonight tell him not to employ a dog to bark and then do the barking himself. It always gets them.

GLEN: What do you mean, to night?

PALERMO: You're seeing him at the 1810 for a work-session.

GLEN: Oh, no!

PALERMO: What do you mean, oh, no, he's paying you!

GLEN: I can't stand any more talk about technique!

PALERMO: Ten o'clock sharp, in the lounge. I'm off to see my quack. My heart's having jumping fits. You can stay in bed all day today, as you'll be working tonight.

He goes.

GLEN: I lay thinking over what Muriel had said. She didn't come back to the office that day. She was working nights, too. In fact, all three of us were. But then I felt a quiet rebellion. It was a decision of action, too. What power I had I was going to use. I meant to upset Grigg's plans altogether. I was going to sign something, but not with the devil. I was a victim like Muriel perhaps, but I wasn't going to be a whore at least! I dressed quickly and drank a cup of tea at the Strand Palace Hotel. Then I slipped round to Jack Ryan's office. Grigg was going to get his press report all right, but not the one he planned. It was going to be the truth. It was dark and a dull rain had started. Ryan was there, and my name worked like a charm.

16.

JACK RYAN's office.

RYAN: Well, Glen, spit it out quick and I might have room for it.

GLEN: I haven't had time to get a real story together but---

RYAN: Who about?

GLEN: Grigg. The thing is he's trying to buy me up as a sort of personal publicity man.

RYAN: Lucky you.

GLEN: He says you have to have a technique for everything and that as hell's going to break lose you have to have one for that too. He says there's a technique for all the stages that lead up to full-scale war---

RYAN: So there is.

GLEN: And that means breaking windows in embassies and dropping bombs on your own people if necessary, and he said these times are hell and the future lies with men who can walk through hell without flinching.

RYAN: I think that's in his book, yes.

GLEN: And---you got that bit about the chocolate soldier, didn't you?

RYAN: Eh? That was about General Heeley, wasn't it?

GLEN: Yes, well---I mean, you got it.

RYAN: I even printed it.

GLEN: Oh, I haven't seen that yet.

RYAN: It's a masterpiece. But go on.

GLEN: Well, he and Percy Klydonhall are sort of going in together. It seems to be about some project, and Charles Dornelling comes into it too. And they call it Massacre 2.

RYAN: Which is what?

GLEN: Well, Grigg says it's a tarty version of Massacre 1, and Dornelling says it isn't. He says Massacre 1 got them noticed at the Pentagon.

RYAN: Who's they?

GLEN: Well, I suppose the sort of people who work round him.

RYAN: And suppose you tell me what Massacre 1 is?

GLEN: Well, I imagine the same sort of thing as Massacre 2---

RYAN: But you didn't explain that.

GLEN: Well, I mean the police have been round to Muriel, and they keep on asking questions, and they wanted her to say what she heard, and she says she can't help over-hearing, so it must be something secretive, mustn't it?

RYAN: But what does Massacre do? I mean, vegetable or mineral?

GLEN: Well, it takes off.

RYAN: Then it must be a missile.

GLEN: That's it.

RYAN: And to interest both Klydonhall---who has vast oil interests---and Professor Grigg---who has nuclear ones--- it must somehow combine the two.

GLEN: That's what I mean.

RYAN: And something that combines the two is not only a missile but a weapon.

GLEN: That's right.

RYAN: Well, let me tell you something. One talks about weapons when they're finished, not before. Before, they're considered a secret, a red-hot one, such as will burn the fingers of ordinary men.

GLEN: Well, why don't they keep quiet about it, then?

RYAN: Exactly. But perhaps only one of them is indiscreet. Could it be you?

GLEN: Well-----

RYAN: My girl'll see you out.

17.

The 1810 Club.

GLEN: I left the room giddy and ran down the stairs of five storeys, seeing nothing. I was so frightened by my fiasco that I rushed back to my room and packed, just in case I had to make a quick getaway. But who was going to throw me out? Still, I packed even my toilet things. Then I looked at my watch. It was time to see Grigg at the 1810 club. And I discovered I wanted to go. I was even looking forward to it, perhaps because he was a lonely man like me. I found a taxi and was there in a few minutes. The wide foyer lay in the same hush as the evening before, but this time it was a consolation to me: every room was curtained and carpeted as if to ward off not only sounds but human desires as well. There were women coming from the powder room, talking quietly before going up the double staircase that had once been stately and was now over-gilded and tired, because it only had nights to remember, not daylight any more. There wasn't an inch of wall uncovered by damask or satin, or perhaps it was a good imitation. And the band thumped as before. The same tunes. And there was Grigg, waiting for me, a fresh bottle of whisky and two glasses ready.

GRIGG (pouring him a drink) I read your article, by the way. I reckon you've got more technique than ten of me. What makes you so heartless? It said just about everything there was to know on that party, without a single direct phrase. I thought the last sentence was honey---'At the end, close on dawn, I felt like a man with his head in a sack. One thing I can say, the professor has a cellar as well stocked as a nuclear dump. I tasted his Mouton Rothschild, so I know.' OK, Glen---you win, for now.

GLEN: Listen---as a matter of fact, I didn't know that was Jack Ryan---

GRIGG: It's the future I'd worry about. Because if any more of these freelance jobs appear you get the boot from Johnny Palermo. He told me that himself. And extract-<sup>the</sup> ed double the price I offered you last night. So the first round is yours, Glen. But settle down from now on. I've bought you, sex organs and all.

GLEN: Well, they say in the trade don't employ a dog to bark and then do the barking yourself.

GRIGG: That's fine saying, Glen, but understandably I'm rattled when I see that stuff through the steam of my coffee every damned morning. It'll have to stop---for my nervous system alone. I'm beat, Glen, try and see that. She came back this morning knocked to hell. She was reeling. And she gave me a chronicle of the whole thing. There's nothing she didn't do to that man, Glen! But the way I look at it is this, I'm a phenomena at present struggling between jealousy over my wife and the urge on my side to have a damned good time while the going's good. I'm juggling with the possibilities. And I'm working at the problem in order to survive. Now I'm talking to you about this, Glen, because I've devoted a whole lecture to the subject of the survivor.

GLEN falls asleep.

GRIGG: In a way that's a sort of visionary concept, for the future. I mean, what the hell have we got at present that we'd like to keep? Damn little, so one day somebody's going to blow it all--- Hell, you've fallen sleep!

GLEN: I'm sorry!

GRIGG: This is a work-session, Glen. Well, to come to the real point, I was with Percy Klydonhall today, and they were two of the finest hours in my life. We were up in space! We populated the universe with new thoughts! We put a human colony on every star within reach of the earth, we had stations up there for the study of space philosophy, for stellar agriculture, a communications system that'd make a ring round the earth so as when you look up at the sky you don't look your own death in the face like you do now, you see life!

GLEN falls asleep again.

GRIGG: You look into a bright lighted arena bustling with human affairs, let's compare it to a vast forum--- there'll be watchers in the sky night and day. Now what are the deliberations of a house of deputies or parliament or congress compared to that? They won't be necessary any more! We'll have the freedom of the

skies! Laboratories, lecture rooms, TV units, research groups---floating about in space! We're going to make security on this earth, have it watched every minute of the day! Am I making myself clear, Gl---? Well, look-it, he's out again! Glen, Glen! Are you in my employ or not?

GLEN: No, I was listening---I mean, won't that interfere with the weather---I've been losing--?

GRIGG: Terrestrial weather, you mean?

GLEN: Well, that's the weather we've got.

GRIGG: But not the weather everybody in the universe has: don't let's be provincial about that. Yes, it could be. It seems that just about anything you do two hundred miles up, even a mild fart, has some effect on the earth sooner or later. But if you mess up terrestrial weather, it means you've got the power to make it good too!

GLEN: Yes, but I mean what's the point of getting to the moon?

GRIGG: The moon? I ought to charge tuition fees! You believe that crap about pin-up boys dancing about in space? That's a cover-story, Glen---for people like you. It's moonshine, to get the earth under surveillance for all time, that's the object, just as medicine got the body under surveillance for all time! /you

GLEN: But who are they going to surveylk?

GRIGG: The enemy of course! They're fitted up with nuclear tools, that's what the moonshine department didn't tell you! Did you think we were back in the days of Faraday and the Royal Society? No, Glen, life's a fight---we have to fight to work, to think, like we had to fight to get our language on top of every other! In a way, Glen, we're finished with the earth. It's too small for us. Instead of talking about ideals and absolutes and God knows what else, we'll be able to sit up there and see it all, the whole damned universe laid out before us! It's a kind of Greek world all over again, Glen---but instead of Socrates sitting round chewing the fat with his boyfriends, he's doing something! We'll have stellar research groups working and analysing and throwing out their ideas in a kind of glorious mess that brings up an absolute sinch of an idea every now and then! That's science! Well, you look a little more wide-awake, Glen, but I reckon that's enough for today. Glen---mind if I talk about my personal affairs? I mean, you have to know the whole man. low/

GLEN: Go ahead.

GRIGG: As I say, she's eating him up, Glen. When she comes in at dawn she can go on where she left off, too. It seems she don't even need sleep. But I'll tell you something, Glen: when I see how this poor damned wife of mine can't wait to get back to that charnel house they've made between them, I say to myself, think of your ideas, don't give in! You know, Glen, I follow her round to that office of yours, I've even been up there just after they've gone and smelled her smell on the air. There's no key, you can walk in.

GLEN: Yes, I know.

GRIGG: That's not your bedroom in my eyes, Glen, it's a garden of delights, except I don't get a damned one of 'em! I told her this morning when she got back, you're a monster, Lou, I said, and she said to me, isn't that the way you want me? And it's true, I don't want any of this humbug and nice living and all that crap, I want the truth. So I said, OK, Lou, do it all you like and get it out of your system. Know what she said?

GLEN: No?

GRIGG: Five me one night, she said. One whole night, not just a couple or three hours. Imagine, Glen, the whole damned night diving into that charnel house! She needs it so bad it's like a pain and I love her so much I won't see her suffer. So I said, OK, you have that one whole night. ~~Which is why I'm here~~ Tonight. But it frightens me, Glen! She told me they only have to get inside a room and they just kind of throw themselves in like boxers, they're stripped off before you can say Hieronymus Bosch!

GLEN: On my bed, too.

GRIGG: Exactly, Glen. That's why we're here. I promised to keep you out of that bed till dawn.

GLEN: What? But I had a sleepless night---I can't do that!

GRIGG: Think of it like an all-night vigil, a kind of duty. Boy, I'm in such a state I could fertilise a shed full o' cattle! Don't tell me infidelity breaks up marriages---it's an aphrodisiac!

MURIEL enters.

MURIEL: Dance, honey?

GRIGG: Well---would you excuse me, Glen?

MURIEL: And, listen, I don't want a drunk on my hands tonight.

They go.

GLEN: I took the chance of leaving. I mean, she looked as if she had plenty for him to do, without me. It wasn't long after midnight and I spent the whole night walking. I didn't mind. It was better than drinking, and my tiredness were off. I walked in St James's Park, and heard the ducks stirring at the edge of the lake. Nothing moved along the Mall, and it seemed like a quiet garden path leading into the past. The mist turned to fog, and poured from the river in cloud-falls, chilling and choking, and fog-horns sounded from the Docks. When I got to the office it was the hour of dawn but you could see nothing. The door to the street had been left open. There were no lights on upstairs.

The lights are dim.

GLEN: The office lay in a curious silence, its furniture waiting for us tenants, dim and soft. There was no light to be switched on for the stairs, and I stumbled up slowly, aware of her scent again. They must have left a moment ago. Or perhaps they were still there? fallen asleep?

The lights go out.

GLEN: I walked up the remaining stairs cautiously, listening for the sound of breathing. But there was nothing. At the top of the stairs I again stood silently, listening as hard as I could. My door was open. I fumbled for the light. Strangely, I was aware of someone and nearly decided to go back down again. But I switched the light on.

18.

The attic room.  
The lights come up. PALERMO  
is lying face-down in the bed,  
one arm dangling. He is app-  
arently naked, but covered most-  
ly by blankets.

GLEN: I saw a hand, then an arm, and thought they must both be there, asleep. But nothing stirred. The hand was lying open in a submissive way, dangling. It was his. And he was alone. He was quite still. A towel---one of mine---lay on the floor. His hand had a delicate stillness about it---a heavy gold ring on his marriage finger. I'd never seen the back of his neck before---delicate too, with something hesitant. I was about to call him, even to pull him by the arm, but then I saw what his stillness was. I stood there for a long time, the silence so deep that the noise of my shoes when I moved made me jump. But death calmed me. I stared and stared at him. I knelt down and looked into his face. His eyes were closed. No breathing. I called his name softly, 'Palermo, Palermo.' My whisper was like dust. I began shivering. His clothes were on my chest of drawers, the trousers thrown down carelessly. All the time I gazed at his body. His neck seemed to become frailer and frailer, unguarded now. I sat down close to him, my feet tucked up to avoid his hand. And I went on looking at him. Once a sigh came from him, but I knew he wasn't alive: it was like the last sigh afterwards, when the summary has been taken. The door was ajar, leading into darkness. It was like talking to him. He lay there telling me everything that had happened, and was still advising me. But now he was telling me real things, and I was listening, so much that I didn't want to get up, ever. Yet I would never know what he said. A car went by outside, booming between the houses. He seemed to be disappearing from life slowly. The talking was over. I got up, groaned with the effort. I walked downstairs, yawning and shivering in turn. I went through to his office and took up the phone, dialled the operator and said in a tired voice hardly above a whisper, 'Get me the police'. She said, 'What is it for, please?' But I said nothing to this. Then at last she said, 'I'll get them for you.' And I mumbled the address. A long time passed. I heard voices on the stairs. People came up slowly, clattering with their boots. They talked to each other.

FIRST POLICEMAN (off) Reckon this is right?

SECOND POLICEMAN (off) Anybody here?

FIRST POLICEMAN (appearing) There's a bloke.

The two policemen, in plain clothes, enter.

FIRST POLICEMAN: OK, mate, you look after the bed. (To GLEN) What's happened? Whose room is this? Yours? Suppose you come along to the station with us? There's plenty of time. We've got a car. It's only round the corner. Phone here? How did it happen, mate?

FIRST POLICEMAN goes out with  
GLEN.

Darkness again.

19.

Police station.

FIRST POLICEMAN: Can you explain what he was doing in your  
room?

GLEN: He used it sometimes.

FIRST P: What for?

GLEN: I don't know.

FIRST P: I reckon you do know, mate.

GLEN: Well, it's not my business.

FIRST P: It's ours, though. There were signs of violence, we  
think. Not violence exactly but some struggle took  
place. Know anything about that?

GLEN: No.

SECOND POLICEMAN brings in a cup  
of tea and puts it down by GLEN.

SECOND P: Cup of tea---warm you up.

GLEN: How long are you going to keep me here?

SECOND POLICEMAN goes.

FIRST P: We have to guard against foul play. If he's a friend  
of yours, you'll understand that. The post mortem'll  
be through in a minute.

GLEN drinks thirstily.

FIRST P: So what was he doing in your bed?

GLEN: Well, he used to sleep there.

FIRST P: But he had a place of his own.

GLEN: Well, it was his office, not my place at all.

FIRST P: And you say you walked about all night?

GLEN: Yes.

FIRST P: You're hiding something from me, but I'll find out what it is.

SECOND POLICEMAN returns.

SECOND P: He was with Grigg's wife.

FIRST P: Who was?

SECOND P: The deceased.

FIRST P: Better ring Cambridge constabulary.

SECOND POLICEMAN goes out.

FIRST P: (showing him a notebook) Recognise this?

GLEN: Yes, it's mine.

FIRST P: Can you tell me what it's about?

GLEN: Kind of weather diary. I'd been losing money on my wine.

FIRST P: What about the rockets to the moon? What about this---'Ranger rocket launched from US to hit moon; Russians launch satellite with two men aboard'. Does that come under the heading of weather?

GLEN: I thought so. It worked out---about ten days afterwards the weather always started playing tricks. Just a hunch.

FIRST P: Known Professor Grigg long?

GLEN: No.

FIRST P: Did you have dinner with him in Cambridge on the 28th of last month?

GLEN: Yes---well, I suppose it was that date. About then.

FIRST P: Did you come to England to contact him?

GLEN: No. I'd never heard of him.

FIRST P: Did you speak to General Heeley at the professor's Apartment on another occasion?

GLEN: No.

FIRST P: Were you aware of the existence of Mr Charles Dornelling at the flat on this second occasion?

GLEN: Not until afterwards, when I was introduced to him.

FIRST P: We found your suitcases packed. Can you explain that?

GLEN: I did it the night before.

FIRST P: Why?

GLEN: I don't know.

FIRST P: You meant to leave?

GLEN: The work was getting me down, I suppose---yes.

FIRST P: It's the main reason I'm keeping you here.

SECOND POLICEMAN comes in.

SECOND P: There's a call for this gentleman, from Cambridge.

FIRST P: Who from?

SECOND P: Professor Grigg's wife.

FIRST P: Put it through. You can take it alone.

Both policemen leave.

GLEN (answering phone) Yes?

LOUISE (over the speakers) You found him.

GLEN: Yes.

LOUISE: Glen---I had to pull myself out from underneath. I couldn't get out. I was crying. I was pleading with him, Glen, and he wasn't alive any more. Jeff's having a Mass said. Glen... Godd bye.

GLEN: Good bye.

She hangs up.  
FIRST POLICEMAN returns.

FIRST P: Well, the autopsy's through. Heart failure. I thought that was the story. Always a woman in it somewhere, eh? So you can go, sir. Take some rest. Like a car back?

GLEN: No, that's all right, thanks.

FIRST P: Mind how you go.

20.

No more props. GLEN is alone.

GLEN: I went back to the office. No one was there. Lou's words kept rolling in my mind like a prayer-wheel. I went to the bank and transferred over three hundred pounds into traveller's cheques. And I bought a ticket to Naples. I even remembered Mr Parsons and went to see him. I told him the police had been to my room and he almost pushed me out of his shop. I wondered about Muriel. I thought of her with Palermo, as if their destiny lay together. I even thought she might be his wife. The little prayer-wheel of thought went round and round: in the train, in the taxi, in the harbour. It only stopped when I was standing in my own bedroom, with half my vineyard in ruins outside. Most of my terraces were broken down, staves and wires as well, though not disastrously. What they called a cyclone---another one--- had done it. Part of an outhouse had collapsed on my vats and casks. A wall had split like an orange. It wasn't much, all told. My wife had thought not to worry me about it. And our house was all right. <sup>^</sup> It would need every penny of the money I had made. I was in luck, there. And I'd made a friend, who was dead.

*But*