

#1 - Margot and Maxine

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

(There is a coat rack near the front door.)

(Next to the drinks table is a wastebasket.)

(Next to the sofa is a mending basket.)

(It's seven-thirty p.m. Friday evening. September.)

(MARGOT and MAXINE are drinking cocktails. MAXINE smokes.)

Start

MARGOT. So. How would you murder me?

MAXINE. How would you *like* to be murdered?

MARGOT. What are my choices?

MAXINE. Oh, there are so many methods to choose from. Alphabetically there's asphyxiation, blade, bludgeon, bullet...

MARGOT. Blow to the head?

MAXINE. Same as bludgeon really.

MARGOT. Sorry.

MAXINE. Drowning. Electrocutation. Garroting. Hanging. Poison. Strangling.

MARGOT. Isn't strangling the same as garroting?

MAXINE. Garroting is a subcategory of strangling.

MARGOT. I see.

MAXINE. Truth be told, they're both subcategories of asphyxiation.

MARGOT. God is in the details. Go on.

MAXINE. Shoot. Stab. Erm...

MARGOT. You're up to T.

MAXINE. Tickle to death?

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MARGOT. It's been tried.

MAXINE. Yes, I know, you're immune.

MARGOT. *(Beat.)* You're disturbingly good at this.

MAXINE. It's all I've thought about for the past year.

MARGOT. Murder?

MAXINE. Means, motives, killer and killed.

MARGOT. It would defeat me. Having to come up with the motive alone. I mean, how many motives are there, really?

MAXINE. Five.

MARGOT. Five?

MAXINE. Five for murder, yes.

MARGOT. I'll bet I can guess them.

MAXINE. Go on.

MARGOT. Money. Fear. Jealousy. Revenge... Uhm... five you said?

MAXINE. I did, yes.

MARGOT. I give up.

MAXINE. Protecting someone you love. *(Beat.)* Was it all right, my dropping by? I mean, we *had* said we'd meet at the theater, the three of us.

MARGOT. No, this is better, seeing you without Tony.

MAXINE. Why?

MARGOT. There's something I wanted to tell you. When Tony let me know you were coming to London about your book, I knew I couldn't put it off any longer.

MAXINE. Better top this off then.

(MARGOT refreshes their drinks.)

End

Callback #1a - Margot and Maxine

2

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(MARGOT refreshes their drinks.)

Callback #1a - Margot and Maxine (cont.)

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

MARGOT. After you went back to New York last year and wrote to me, I...I burned all your letters. All except one. You probably know the one I mean.

MAXINE. I think I can guess.

MARGOT. I carried it wherever I went. Then one weekend Tony and I were going away. We were at Victoria Station. The letter was in my handbag. But that day, I set my bag down to pay for something and when I turned back it was gone.

MAXINE. Did you get it back?

MARGOT. *(Nods.)* We reported it, and a week later the bag showed up in the lost and found. But the letter wasn't in it. A few days later I got this.

(MARGOT gives MAXINE a small note.)

MAXINE. *(Reads.)* "Am in possession of a letter belonging to you. If you wish its return, place five thousand pounds in a package and leave it for John S. King, 23 Newport Street, SW7." Done in block capital letters. Anyone could have written this. What did you do?

MARGOT. Nothing.

MAXINE. Didn't you want it back? Five thousand pounds couldn't have made much of a difference to you.

MARGOT. Of course I wanted it back. But I was terrified to make a move. Then I received a second note.

(MARGOT gives MAXINE a second note.)

MAXINE. *(Reads.)* "If you do not deliver five thousand pounds to John S. King at 23 Newport Street by this Friday, the letter will be given to your husband."

MARGOT. So I took five thousand pounds out of the bank, put it in a parcel and left it at 23 Newport Street. It's a little shop people use as a forwarding address.

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MAXINE. And then?

MARGOT. Then I waited for the letter to be returned, but...nothing came. After a week, I went back. They said a messenger had picked up the parcel.

MAXINE. You never heard from the blackmailer again?

MARGOT. No.

MAXINE. Is that why you told me to stop writing?

MARGOT. *(Nods.)* I imagined any letter you wrote to me being stolen and read.

MAXINE. *(Re: notes.)* May I hold on to these for a while?

MARGOT. *(Shrugs.)* If you like.

(MAXINE puts the notes into her purse.)

MAXINE. You never told Tony?

MARGOT. No, and I never will.

(Beat.)

That night I went to your flat to say good-bye, Tony was driving to Oxford for the weekend. When I came back here, I collapsed onto that sofa and cried for hours. Eventually I fell asleep. Then I woke, and Tony was standing there, looking down on me. He said he'd got halfway to Oxford when suddenly he knew that he had to give up writing and take that job at your publishers.

MAXINE. Yes, he called me next morning and said the same thing. Public relations. I hear he's very good at it.

MARGOT. It's his great talent, charming people.

MAXINE. Did he say why he was giving up on his writing?

MARGOT. He said he wanted to become the husband I deserved.

MAXINE. And has he been?

End

#2 - Tony/ Maxine/ Margot

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

I've taken up Indonesian cooking. I gave up smoking.
And there's Tony.

MAXINE. And does that fill your days?

MARGOT. Not one bit.

(Sound of a key in the front door.)

(MARGOT and MAXINE turn away from each other as -)

(TONY enters. He wears a raincoat and carries a briefcase.)

Start

MAXINE. There's the boy!

MARGOT. Tony, where have you been?

TONY. Sorry, darlings, an emergency blew up just as I was trying to leave.

(TONY kisses MARGOT.)

MAXINE. Aren't you going to kiss *me*?

TONY. I was observing the formalities: first the wife, *then* the lover.

MAXINE. You and I were never lovers.

TONY. Quite right, a dozen dinner dates does not a lover make.

(TONY kisses MAXINE. Then he goes to the drinks table and pours a drink.)

So, what have you two been conspiring about? "Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous"?

MARGOT. Don't fix yourself a drink, you've no time. The play starts in less than -

TONY. Yes, I know, and...I can't go.

MARGOT. What?

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MAXINE. But the play's a murder mystery, and it's supposed to be dreadful, we'll have such a good time.

TONY. I know, and I'm sorry, but I've got to revise the jacket copy for your book.

MAXINE. I thought that had been done months ago.

TONY. It was, but the boss says it needs to be completely re-done. It's got to be ready first thing tomorrow, so I've no choice.

MAXINE. Can't you dash off something in the morning?

TONY. In the morning, you and I have breakfast with the editor of the *Times Sunday Supplement*, then a meeting about the cover art. I told them you hate the colors, lurid you called them.

MAXINE. Not lurid *enough*.

TONY. They're showing you some new ideas based on the same look.

MAXINE. Woman, corpse, blood?

TONY. It's what sells.

MARGOT. Lovely.

MAXINE. When's the BBC interview?

TONY. Tomorrow evening at eight o'clock. Very good time slot. You'll be listened to by every wife, widow and pensioner in the country.

MAXINE. My readership.

TONY. And we're having supper after.

MARGOT. *(To MAXINE.)* Where would you like to go?

MAXINE. *(To MARGOT.)* Where would *you* like to go?

TONY. *(To MARGOT.)* Uhm, darling? Pottifer is joining us for dinner tomorrow night.

#2 - Tony/ Maxine/ Margot (cont.)

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MARGOT. Oh, Lord.

MAXINE. Who's Pottifer?

TONY. The BBC talks director. Dinner with him is the price of that awfully good time slot.

(To MARGOT.) I know you loathe him, so I explained you were otherwise engaged.

MARGOT. Ah. Well. Thanks for getting me off the hook. I will now spend a lonely evening at home.

(To MAXINE.) So I won't see you at all tomorrow?

TONY. The studios are just across the park. We'll all have a drink here before we go. That all right, Maxine?

MAXINE. Sure, I'm easy.

TONY. *(Checks his watch.)* Oh. I'd better call and get you a taxi.

MARGOT. Don't bother. We can pick one up at the corner.

TONY. All right, but you'd better go now then.

MAXINE. Come on, let's make a run for it.

End

(MAXINE and MARGOT finish their drinks, pick up their purses and gloves, and open the front door.)

MARGOT. What do you want us to do with your ticket, try to give it away?

TONY. Sell it, have a drink on the proceeds.

MAXINE. Should be good for two drinks. Margot. Your handbag.

(MARGOT picks up her forgotten handbag.)

(A final flurry of "Goodnights" as MAXINE and MARGOT exit.)

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(TONY closes the door.)

(He surveys the living room for a moment. Checks his watch. Finishes his drink. Then goes into gear.)

(He takes the three cocktail glasses and sets them on the drinks table.)

(He dumps the ashes from the ashtray into the wastebasket.)

(He sets the ashtray back on the coffee table.)

(He opens the briefcase, takes out a framed photograph, and places it on the desk as if that's where it always sits.)

(He takes a pair of white cotton gloves from his raincoat pocket and puts them on the arm of the sofa.)

(We hear the front door buzzer.)

(TONY checks his watch again.)

(He kneels next to the sofa, feels under it, and retrieves a cane. He stands and, assuming a painful limp, uses the cane and opens the front door.)

(LESGATE stands there, sports jacket, rakish moustache.)

LESGATE. Mr. Fisher?

TONY. Stephen Fisher, yes. Captain Lesgate?

LESGATE. Yes.

TONY. Do come in.

Start

TONY. I went down to a pub at the end of the street and proceeded to drink heavily. I wondered: Was she going to leave me? What would happen if she *did* leave? There was no question of me leaving her. No, I'd grown to depend on her. All these expensive tastes I'd acquired. I sat there and thought of three different ways of killing the other woman. I thought of a few more of killing my wife. That seemed by far the more sensible route. Margot and I had just made our wills, leaving everything we had to each other. Hers worked out at just over two million pounds. When I returned home that night, there was Margot right where you're sitting, asleep, that pillow stained with tears. I looked down on her for a long time. Then her eyes opened and she looked up at me, and I told her my writing days were over. As fortune would have it, a publisher I knew had offered me a job. He was never going to publish my books, but he thought I could be useful in public relations. I threw myself into it, and in three months I was assistant head of publicity. In six, I'd taken over the top job. They can't do without me now. And irony: I'm in charge of the sales push for the other woman's first novel. She's just arrived in London to promote it.

LESGATE. She left England?

TONY. Turns out the spaghetti was a farewell dinner. They'd broken it off, that night. There were letters, though, after, from New York. They usually arrived on Thursdays. My wife burnt all of them except one. That one she would transfer from handbag to handbag, it was always with her. That letter became an obsession. I had to find out what was in it, so I stole it.

LESGATE. You stole your wife's love letter?

TONY. I even wrote her two anonymous notes offering to sell it back.

LESGATE. Why?

TONY. Malice. I was hoping it would make her come and confess everything, beg my forgiveness. But she didn't.

LESGATE. Christ. Did she pay up?

TONY. Five thousand pounds. But I kept the letter.

(TONY takes out his wallet and lets a letter fall out of it onto the floor. TONY starts to bend down, but he winces.)

LESGATE. I'll get it.

(TONY watches as LESGATE picks up the letter.)

TONY. Go on. Read.

(Gestures to the letter, LESGATE opens it, reads.)

LESGATE. Very, erm, explicit.

TONY. Yes.

(LESGATE puts the letter back into Tony's wallet. TONY snaps it shut.)

Anyway, they must have had the fear of God put into them because after that the letters stopped. Funny to think that just a year ago I was sitting in that pub, actually planning to murder my wife. And I might have done it if I hadn't seen something that changed my mind.

LESGATE. What was it you saw?

TONY. I saw you.

LESGATE. ...What was so odd about that?

TONY. The coincidence. Only a week before I'd been to a reunion dinner and the fellows had been talking about you, how you'd been court-martialed during the war,

#3 - Lesgate/ Tony (cont.)

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then a year in prison. That was news. Mind you, at college we'd always said Swann would end up in jail. That cash box. Everybody knew Alfred didn't take that money, you did.

LESGATE. (*Reddens, stands.*) Thanks for the drink. I take it you won't be wanting that car after all.

TONY. Don't you want me to tell you why I brought you here?

LESGATE. (*Beat.*) Yes, I think you'd better.

(During the next speech, TONY drops his limp, takes out his handkerchief, and wipes fingerprints off anything LESGATE touched.)

TONY. As I say, it was quite a coincidence, seeing you in The Grape and Vine, just down the street from that flat. I asked about and found that you rented a room above the pub. You weren't Lesgate yet. The owner of The Grape and Vine knew you as "Pryce-Jones." I liked the hyphen. Would you mind passing me your glass? Thank you so much. You see, since that first night at the pub, I've been following you. I was hoping that, sooner or later, I might catch you at something, so I could, well, not to put too fine a point on it...

LESGATE. Blackmail me?

TONY. Influence you. After a few weeks, I got to know your routine which made it a lot easier.

LESGATE. Rather dull work.

End

TONY. It was, a bit, at first, but you know how it is - you take up a hobby and the more you get to know of it the more fascinating it becomes. You became *quite* fascinating. In fact, there were times when I felt that you belonged to me. You moved from The Grape and Vine and took lodgings in South Kensington under the name "Asprey." Six weeks later, you disappeared, owing

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six weeks rent and fifty pounds borrowed from your landlady.

(LESGATE reaches for the brandy.)

If you want another drink, do you mind putting on these gloves? Your new lodgings were in Belsize Park. There Mr. Asprey became Mr. Waterhouse. Mr. Waterhouse left *those* lodgings owing fifteen weeks rent and somewhat richer for his brief encounter with a Miss Wallace. Miss Wallace was in love with you, wasn't she? I suppose she thought you were growing that handsome mustache to please her. Poor Miss Wallace. By summer you'd moved to another flat owned by a Mrs. Van Dorn whose late husband left her two hotels and a very large apartment house. That's where you became Captain Lesgate. The only trouble is, Mrs. Van Dorn does rather enjoy being courted, and she is very expensive. Perhaps that's why you've been trying to sell her car for over a month.

LESGATE. Mrs. Van Dorn asked me to sell it for her.

TONY. I know. I called her up earlier today. She only wanted eight hundred.

(Beat.)

LESGATE. Where's the nearest police station?

TONY. Opposite the church, two minutes walk.

LESGATE. Suppose I go there now?

TONY. What would you tell them?

LESGATE. I shall tell them you're trying to blackmail me into...

TONY. Yes?

LESGATE. Murdering your wife.

Callback #3a - Lesgate/ Tony

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

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(*Beat.*)

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LESGATE. Suppose I go there now?

TONY. What would you tell them?

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LESGATE. Murdering your wife.

Start

TONY. And if you did, I'd say you came here tonight, half drunk, and tried to borrow money on the strength that we were at college together. When I refused you said something about a letter belonging to my wife. As far as I could make out you were offering to sell it to me. I gave you what money I had and you gave me the letter. It has your fingerprints on it. Remember?

Then you said if I went to the police you'd tell some crazy story about my wanting you to murder my wife. But before we go any further, consider the inconvenience. I'd have to tell the police Captain Lesgate's name is really Swann. The tricky thing there is that C.A. Swann died four years ago. Yes, I found the obituary. Motoring accident, body burned beyond recognition. I take it whomever you put behind the wheel was your first victim.

LESGATE. What do you mean, "first"?

TONY. Well, I mean to say, I *assume* he was the first, just as I assume the second was Miss Wallace. She was in all the papers. Middle-aged woman found dead from drug overdose. No one knows who gave the stuff to her. But we know, don't we? Poor Miss Wallace. And now you're planning to marry Mrs. Van Dorn, am I right?

LESGATE. Smart, aren't you?

TONY. Not really, I've just had time to think things out, put myself in your position. That's why I know you're going to agree.

LESGATE. Why?

TONY. For the same reason that a donkey with a stick behind him and a carrot in front goes forwards and not backwards.

LESGATE. Tell me about the carrot.

TONY. Five thousand pounds in cash.

LESGATE. For a murder?

TONY. For a few minutes work. At no risk. I do think a honeymoon with Mrs. Van Dorn would be preferable to the hangman's noose. Five thousand pounds should see you safely married and on the Continent. You'll find it makes such a difference to have money in your pocket.

LESGATE. This five thousand pounds, where is it?

(TONY opens the briefcase, shows its contents to LESGATE.)

Is that the five thousand pounds she..?

TONY. Uh hm.

LESGATE. How much is there?

TONY. The full amount. I don't think you'll do a runner, not with Mrs. Van Dorn in your future and me knowing about Miss Wallace and the rest.

LESGATE. When would this take place?

TONY. Tomorrow night.

LESGATE. Tomorrow?! Not a chance.

TONY. It's got to be tomorrow, I've arranged things that way.

LESGATE. Where?

TONY. Approximately where you're standing now.

LESGATE. How?

TONY. Tomorrow evening, at exactly eight o'clock you will enter the house by the street door. The street door is always unlocked.

(TONY opens the front door, steps into the hall and points to the fifth step of the staircase.)

You'll find the key to the front door under the stair carpet out in the hall. On the fifth step.

End

#4 - Margot / Maxine (Tony read by SM)

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

(**MAXINE** hurries in, wearing gloves. **TONY** closes the front door.)

(**MAXINE** hugs **MARGOT**. **MARGOT**'s hands hover, unable to embrace **MAXINE**. **MAXINE** senses her resistance.)

Start

MAXINE. Did he hurt you?

TONY. Just some bruising. On her throat.

(**MARGOT** hesitates, then loosens her turtleneck to reveal the purple bruises.)

MAXINE. Jesus.

(**MAXINE** makes a move towards **MARGOT**, but **MARGOT** pulls away. **MAXINE**, stung and confused, removes her gloves and sets them on the table.)

Why didn't you tell me what happened?

TONY. Look, I / know -

MAXINE. / When they said it was a minor emergency, I figured it was something like a bathtub leak. Reading it in the papers this morning -

TONY. Yes, sorry, I should have phoned your hotel, but the police kept us rather busy last night. They didn't leave until past three. Would you like coffee? I can make some.

MAXINE. No. Thanks.

TONY. I'd, erm, best change. Keep Margot company, would you?

(**TONY** exits to the bedroom, closes the door.)

MAXINE. What's the matter?

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MARGOT. Didn't you hear? I stuck a pair of scissors into a man last night. I'm a murderer now.

MAXINE. No, you're not. You defended yourself.

MARGOT. I did. Yes.

MAXINE. I'm proud of you.

MARGOT. Are you?

MAXINE. Of course I am. If you hadn't done what you did... The papers say it was a burglary.

MARGOT. Do they?

MAXINE. Well, isn't that what it was?

MARGOT. That's not what *he* said.

MAXINE. Who?

MARGOT. The man who attacked me.

MAXINE. ...He spoke to you?

MARGOT. Oh, yes.

MAXINE. What did he say?

MARGOT. He said... He said he'd been paid five thousand pounds to murder me.

MAXINE. What?

MARGOT. (*Nods.*) He said: "I've got my money. *Your* money, actually."

MAXINE. (*Putting it together.*) The five thousand pounds you paid for the letter?

MARGOT. (*Nods.*) He called it a neat trick, getting a person to pay for her own murder.

MAXINE. Who did he say sent him?

MARGOT. We never got that far. I was wondering if it might have been you.

#4 - Margot / Maxine (Tony read by SM) (cont.)

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

MAXINE. I'm sorry?

MARGOT. I said you could have written those blackmail notes, and when you got the money, you could've used it to pay him to kill me.

MAXINE. Just why should I do that?

MARGOT. Revenge. For my breaking things off. It is one of your five reasons, isn't it? Revenge? And it's the sort of thing you think up, plotting how to murder people, working it out. He said the murder was planned, it was planned to take place at precisely ten after eight. It had to take place precisely then because the alibi was the radio.

MAXINE. Why would his alibi be the radio?

MARGOT. That's what I couldn't figure. But then I'm stupid. He didn't say it was *his* alibi. He said it was *the* alibi. It didn't hit me until I realized I could hear your voice. I'd tuned in just as I said I would. He had to kill me at that moment precisely because that was when you were on the talks program. An alibi of three million listeners.

MAXINE. Margot, / this -

MARGOT. / Then I thought about your letter that I couldn't destroy. It was so passionate, uncharacteristically so. I started to wonder if you'd written about us that way for a reason: so the letter couldn't help but be read as incriminating. No one reading a letter like that could think our friendship was innocent, not after you'd described it that way. It would be unmistakable that we'd been lovers. I'd have no choice but to buy it back, a boringly conventional woman like me, so fearful of scandal. You were right, five thousand pounds didn't make much of a difference to me. But it could make quite a difference to a struggling writer living in a sixth floor walkup.

(Pause.)

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MAXINE. Just so I've got this straight: I wrote a love letter so I could blackmail you for five thousand pounds, then used that five thousand pounds to have you killed.

MARGOT. Does it work?

MAXINE. It's good. May I steal it?

MARGOT. It's all yours. Even...

(Laughs.)

...even the blackmail notes I showed to you, you actually managed to make me give them back to you.

MAXINE. "Back" to me? What, you think I did that to cover my tracks?

MARGOT. Where are they now?

MAXINE. At my hotel.

MARGOT. And probably hard to find.

MAXINE. Do you know how crazy you sound?

MARGOT. (Explodes.) I killed a man last night!

MAXINE. (Beat; careful.) I know. Didn't think you had it in you. I see now that you do. What did the police think when you told them this man said he'd been paid to kill you?

MARGOT. I didn't tell the police.

MAXINE. Why not?

MARGOT. Because if I told them that, I'd have to tell them the rest, about the money, the letter, us.

MAXINE. Did you tell Tony?

MARGOT. The only person I've told is you.

MAXINE. Why?

MARGOT. To see how you'd react.

End

#5 - Hubbard/ Tony/ Margot

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MARGOT. No.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Would you show me where you were when he attacked you?

(MARGOT moves to the desk.)

MARGOT. Here.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. You said you went to fix yourself a drink.

(INSPECTOR HUBBARD moves to the drinks table to show that the desk is not in the same direction.)

MARGOT. Erm, yes, but then I went to the desk.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. After you fixed yourself a drink?

MARGOT. I didn't fix myself a drink.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Why not?

MARGOT. (Hesitates.) Because the phone rang.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. This was your husband calling?

TONY. Yes.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Why were you calling your wife, sir?

MARGOT. Yes, *why did* you phone me?

TONY. I wanted to see if I could change your mind about going to supper.

(To INSPECTOR HUBBARD.) Miss Hadley and I were going to the Savoy. My wife had elected not to join us.

(To MARGOT.) I felt guilty about you spending the evening alone.

Start

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Right, then. You come in here, you go to the drinks table, the phone rings, you go over to the desk.

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MARGOT. I went to the desk and I picked up the phone. That's when he attacked me.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Attacked you how?

MARGOT. He got something round my neck.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. By "something" you mean...?

MARGOT. It felt like a silk stocking or a silk scarf.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. What happened then?

MARGOT. He got the stocking or whatever it was around my neck and pushed me over the desk. I remember feeling for the scissors.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Were those scissors usually on the desk?

MARGOT. No, usually they're in that mending basket there, but I'd forgotten to put them away.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. So, you forgot to put them away, but you remembered they were on the desk.

MARGOT. I didn't so much *remember*, I *felt* them.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. So you felt for the scissors...?

MARGOT. I felt *around*, and...and my hands found the scissors, and I...I...I stabbed him with them.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Yes, I see. How do you suppose he got in?

MARGOT. Through the French doors there.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Why do you think that?

MARGOT. (Unsure.) Erm, because...

TONY. Because when I got back those doors were wide open.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Were they locked last night?

#5 - Hubbard/ Tony/ Margot (cont.)

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

TONY. They were locked when Miss Hadley and I left for the studio.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Are you quite sure?

TONY. I always lock them when I leave the flat.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Then how did he get in?

TONY. We assume... well, he must have jimmied the lock.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. The lock was carefully examined. It's quite undamaged. And there's no glass broken.

TONY. But that doesn't make sense.

(To **MARGOT.**) Darling, did you open the French doors last night?

MARGOT. Once, to get some air.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. When was this?

MARGOT. After he attacked me.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Not before?

MARGOT. No.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Are you sure?

MARGOT. Yes.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Mrs. Wendice, why didn't you ring the police immediately after this happened?

MARGOT. I thought my husband would call them.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. And it didn't occur to you to call for a doctor?

MARGOT. No.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Why not?

MARGOT. He was dead.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. How did you know that?

DIAL M FOR MURDER

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MARGOT. It was obvious.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Did you feel his pulse?

MARGOT. No.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Did you check to see if he was breathing?

MARGOT. I didn't want to get near him, he'd just tried to kill me!

TONY. Inspector, the French doors. If the man didn't come in that way, how did he get in?

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. As a matter of fact, we're quite certain he came in by your front door.

MARGOT. But the front door is always locked.

TONY. Margot, did you open the door and forget to lock it after we'd gone?

MARGOT. No.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Are you quite certain you didn't?

MARGOT. I'm positive.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. How many keys are there to the front door?

MARGOT. Only two. Mine was in my handbag and Tony had his with him.

TONY. That's right, I did.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Do you employ a charwoman?

MARGOT. Yes, but she hasn't got a key. I'm always in when she comes.

TONY. What makes you think he came in through the front door?

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. His shoes. It was raining last night. The ground was soaking wet. Muddy. If he'd come in through the French doors by way of the garden he'd

End

#6 - Tony/ Hubbard/ Margot

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

Start

TONY. Darling, what's going on?

MARGOT. The inspector's trying to say I killed that man intentionally!

(*To INSPECTOR HUBBARD.*) It was self-defense!

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Unfortunately, there were no witnesses, so we've only your word.

TONY. That's not true, I heard it over the telephone.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. What exactly did you hear, Mr. Wendice? Did you hear anything that indicated a struggle was going on?

TONY. What I heard was consistent with my wife's explanation.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. So all you really know is what your wife told you.

(*To MARGOT.*) You suggest that this man came to burgle your flat, but there's no evidence of a burglary. He didn't even have a bag to put things in. You told us he came in by way of the garden, but we know he came in by the front door.

MARGOT. But he can't have got in that way. That door was locked and there are only two keys. My husband had his with him and mine was in my handbag! Here!

(*MARGOT opens her handbag and takes out the key.*)

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. You could have let him in.

(*Beat.*)

MAXINE. You're not suggesting that Margot let him in herself.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. It appears to be the only way he could have entered.

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MARGOT. Don't you even believe I was attacked? How do you think I got these bruises on my throat?

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. You could have caused those bruises yourself. A silk stocking was found under the desk, with two knots tied in it.

MARGOT. That must have been the stocking he used.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. We found its twin balled up inside some crumpled paper at the bottom of your wastebasket. The paper was torn out of a magazine that was on your coffee table. Can you explain why your attacker should do that?

MARGOT. ...No.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Those stockings were yours, weren't they?

MARGOT. No!

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. We know they were. One of the heels had been darned with some silk that didn't quite match. We found a reel of that silk in your mending basket.

MARGOT. That's because I was mending some...

(*Rushes to mending basket and searches inside; doesn't find what she's looking for.*)

There was a pair of stockings in here, I'm sure of it...!

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Let's take a wide view, shall we? Lesgate stole your handbag at Victoria Station and discovered the letter in it. He decided to -

TONY. Hang on, what letter? What are you talking about?

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. The letter from Miss Hadley that Lesgate used to blackmail your wife. Mrs. Wendice paid him five thousand pounds for it, but he didn't return the letter.

End

(MAXINE takes out a cigarette.)

But I am working on something right now, since you ask.

TONY. Is it a mystery?

MAXINE. Yes and no. I'm teasing out the plot, but I don't think some of it holds up. The story's about a woman who kills a man to get back a letter from him. Only she doesn't find it. Even though the police find it quick enough, in one of the dead man's pockets. If you had just killed a man to get a letter, wouldn't you go through every one of his pockets to find it? I know I would. Especially if my husband was hurrying home from the BBC and he was the person I was trying to keep the letter from. Yet she doesn't.

TONY. You're not taking into account panic.

Start

MAXINE. Oh, I'm allowing for panic, confusion, the race against the clock. According to the police, she had the presence of mind amid all that to find a stocking, tie knots in it, then hide its mate. If she had the presence of mind to do all that, why didn't she have the presence of mind to find the letter?

(TONY uses the ice pick to chop more ice, then pours himself a whiskey.)

(MAXINE takes out a box of matches.)

Then there are the stockings. She comes up with the idea to make it look like Lesgate used one of her stockings to strangle her. But then she's got the matching stocking to deal with. She can't leave it in the mending basket, it's the matching stocking that proves the other stocking is hers. She should destroy it. But she doesn't. She hides it in the wastebasket. Badly. So badly the police couldn't possibly overlook it. When the simplest and by far fastest way to get rid of that stocking in an instant would have been to...?

TONY. What?

MAXINE. (Strikes a match.) Put a match to it. The stocking would have gone up in a flash. Poof.

TONY. Would it?

MAXINE. Any woman knows that. Men don't though.

TONY. (Mirthless smile.) No, I suppose we don't.

MAXINE. I want to show you something.

(MAXINE takes out a note and offers it to TONY. TONY takes it.)

TONY. It's the blackmail note.

MAXINE. The second one. Margot gave both of them to me.

TONY. At the trial, you testified that you couldn't find the second one.

MAXINE. I lied. I kept thinking it was a clue, that it would lead to something. I even went to the address on it, 23 Newport Street -

TONY. So did the police. They turned up nothing.

MAXINE. I know, but I still figured I could find a use for it. And I have. My fingerprints are on that note. So are Margot's.

(MAXINE takes the note from TONY.)

And now so are yours.

TONY. What do you plan to do with it?

MAXINE. Tell the police I found it in a pocket. My fingerprints and Margot's are on it because she showed it to me. Both of us testified to that. But your fingerprints are on the blackmail note because...

TONY. Yes?

#7 - Maxine/Tony (cont.)

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DIAL M FOR MURDER

MAXINE. You wrote it, you sent it to Margot, you were the blackmailer, not Lesgate.

TONY. So. What's the deal? I go to the police and confess, or you'll give them that note with my prints on it? I'm not sure I see the advantage. If you give that note to the police, you implicate me. If I confess to the police, I implicate *myself*. Either way, I lose.

MAXINE. That isn't the deal.

TONY. What is it, then?

MAXINE. I give this note to the police, or you give me half of Margot's money.

End

TONY. *(After a beat.)* Oh.

MAXINE. As you said, my book's rotting in a warehouse waiting to be pulped. No respectable publisher will give me a tumble now, not after that trial. Oh, I might be able to write under a pen name, in a few years, but not for the kind of money I would have made if *Your Death is Necessary* had been a best seller. And it would have been a best seller.

TONY. Would have been, yes.

MAXINE. So, you see, I could use a bit of money about now.

TONY. Yes, but for you to get that money, I have to get that money, which means Margot has to be executed.

MAXINE. She does, yes.

(Beat.)

But do you know what I find interesting? You're not arguing the point. You're not saying you didn't hire Lesgate to kill Margot.

TONY. I don't think it necessary. As far as I can tell, you've ginned-up the same hysterical story Margot told when she was arrested, only with me as the villain, instead of

DIAL M FOR MURDER

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you. The police didn't believe it then, neither did the jury.

MAXINE. No, they thought it was a desperate ploy by an unstable woman.

TONY. More to the point, there was no evidence to back it up.

MAXINE. There is now.

(MAXINE holds up the note.)

(TONY goes very cold. We realize he's holding the ice pick.)

(Sound of front door buzzer.)

(Beat.)

(TONY puts down the ice pick and moves to the front door.)

(MAXINE puts the note in her pocket.)

(TONY opens the front door.)

(INSPECTOR HUBBARD, in his raincoat, stands there.)

TONY. Inspector.

INSPECTOR HUBBARD. Mr. Wendice. Sorry to disturb you. May I come in?

(TONY nods.)

(INSPECTOR HUBBARD enters, closes the door.)

(As if surprised.) Miss Hadley.

MAXINE. Inspector.