

AUDITION SIDES

Side 1 - Brandon and Granillo talk after the murder

GRANILLO: You fully understand, Brandon, what we've done?

BRANDON: Do I know what I've done? . . . Yes. I know quite well what I've done. (*He speaks in a rich, easy, powerful, elated and yet withal slightly defiant voice.*) I have done murder.

GRANILLO: Yes.

BRANDON: (*Continuing in same voice.*) I have committed murder. I have committed passionless—motiveless—faultless—and clueless murder. Bloodless and noiseless murder.

GRANILLO: Yes.

BRANDON: An immaculate murder. I have killed. I have killed for the sake of danger and for the sake of killing. And I am alive. Truly and wonderfully alive. That is what I have done, Granno. (*Long pause.*) What's the matter? Are you getting superstitious?

GRANILLO: No. I'm not superstitious.

BRANDON: (*Suavely.*) Then I may put on the light?

GRANILLO: No. You mayn't. . . .

Their figures may now be dimly discerned in the faint glow from the fire.

Brandon?

BRANDON: Yes?

GRANILLO: You remember when Ronald came in? . . .

BRANDON: What do you mean—"when Ronald came in"?

GRANILLO: When Ronald came in here . . . when he came in from the car. You were standing at the door.

BRANDON: Yes.

GRANILLO: Did you see anyone standing there? . . . Up the street . . . about seventy yards?

BRANDON: No.

GRANILLO: There was someone. There was a man. I saw him. I've remembered.

BRANDON: Well, what of it?

GRANILLO: Oh, nothing. (*Long pause.*) Brandon . . .

BRANDON: Yes?

GRANILLO: When I met Ronald. When I met him—coming out of the Coliseum—when I met him, and got him into the car—why shouldn't someone have seen us?

BRANDON: What do you mean by someone?

GRANILLO: Oh, someone. Anyone. Did we think of that, Brandon?

BRANDON: I did.

Granillo is now seated in armchair L. Pause.

GRANILLO: It's in the room, you know. (*Pause.*) Do you think we'll get away with it?

BRANDON: When? Tonight?

GRANILLO: Yes.

BRANDON: Are you suggesting that some psychic force, emanating from that chest there, is going to advise Sir Johnstone Kentley of the fact that the remains—or shall I say the lifeless entirety—of his twenty-year-old son and heir is contained therein? (*Pause.*) My dear Granillo, if you are feeling in any way insecure, perhaps I had better fortify you with a brief summary of facts—with mathematics as it were. Let me please give you——

GRANILLO: Listen!

There is a tense stillness.

BRANDON: What are——?

GRANILLO: Listen, I tell you! (*Another pause. Granillo springs up and goes over to window, where he can be seen peeping through the curtains.*) It's all right. I thought it was Sabot. (*He comes down to chair again.*)

BRANDON: Sabot, in the first place, will not be here until five minutes to nine, if then, for Sabot is seldom punctual. Sabot, in the second place, has been deprived by a wily master of his key. He will therefore ring. Let me, I say, give you a cool narration of our transactions. This afternoon, at about two o'clock, young Ronald Kentley, our fellow-undergraduate, left his father's house with the object of visiting the Coliseum Music Hall. He did so. After the performance he was met in the street by your good self, and invited to this house. He was then given tea, and at six forty-five precisely, done to death by strangulation and rope. He was subsequently deposited in that chest. Tonight, at nine o'clock, his father, Sir Johnstone Kentley, and three well-chosen friends of our own will come round here for regalement. They will talk small talk and depart. After the party, at eleven o'clock . . .

AUDITION SIDES

Side 2 - Brandon and Granillo welcome Raglan to their dinner party.

BRANDON: *(Rising, and taking his hand cordially.)* Hullo, Raglan, old man. Come right in. You know Granillo, don't you?

RAGLAN: Rather.

He shakes hands with Granillo, who has also come forward cordially.

GRANILLO: Quite a long time since we met, though. *(Smiles.)*

RAGLAN: Yes—isn't it? *(Looking round nervously.)* I say, I'm terribly sorry. I've come dressed.

BRANDON: My dear fellow, my fault entirely. Come and seat yourself. *(Leads him affectionately to chair.)* I should have explained. You know we're going up to Oxford tonight?

RAGLAN: Oh, no—are you? I'm not going up till Friday.

BRANDON: Now what are you going to drink? You can have Gin and It. . . . Or Gin and Angostura. And I can do you a very nice Gin and French.

RAGLAN: I should like Gin and It, I think.

BRANDON: Gin and It? Right. *(Goes over to sideboard, opens bottles and commences to pour carefully. Talks while doing this.)* Yes, we leave tonight about twelve, and travel by *(pouring deftly)* automobile—in the *(more pouring)*—let us hope—moonlight. And of course, all this place is simply covered *(pouring)* with books.

RAGLAN: Covered with books?

BRANDON: *(Coming down with drink.)* Yes. In the next room. I've come into a library.

RAGLAN: Come into a library?

BRANDON: *(Going to sideboard to pour a drink for himself.)* Of course, books aren't really in your line, are they, Kenneth? *(He is opening a fresh bottle.)*

RAGLAN: No—not really.

BRANDON: *(Pouring again.)* Did you ever hear of old Gerry Wickham, Kenneth? An uncle of mine.

RAGLAN: Oh, yes—rather.

BRANDON: Well, you know he's died just lately.

RAGLAN: Oh—has he? Yes?

BRANDON: Well, it's his library *(Pouring.)* which he has very kindly *(Pouring.)* and unexpectedly *(Pouring.)* bestowed upon me.

RAGLAN: Good Lord!

BRANDON: To the unspeakable mortification of Sir Johnstone Kentley.

RAGLAN: Oh, Sir Johnstone Kentley. He's quite a famous collector, isn't he?

BRANDON: Yes. He's coming here tonight.

RAGLAN: Good heavens—is he? It is the same man, isn't it? He lives in Grosvenor Square and has a son.

BRANDON: *(Pause.)* Quite right, Kenneth. He lives in Grosvenor Square. *(Pause.)* And has a son.

Brandon comes down with his own drink, lights a cigarette, and sits down.

RAGLAN: Tell me, Sir Johnstone's son. Isn't that Ronald Kentley, the lad who's so frightfully good at sports?

BRANDON: That's right. You don't know him, do you?

RAGLAN: No. I've never met him, but he wins hurdles, and hundreds of yards, and things like that, doesn't he?

BRANDON: Yes. That's right. As a matter of fact, he's the living image of yourself. Isn't he, Granno?

GRANILLO: Yes. He is like.

RAGLAN: Me? In what way?

BRANDON: Oh, in every way. Same age. Same height. Same color. Same sweet and refreshing innocence.

RAGLAN: Oh, shut up. I'm not an athlete, anyway.

BRANDON: No. But you're just as much alive. (*Slight pause.*) In fact, more so.

RAGLAN: (*Awkwardly.*) Am I? Then you're having Sir Johnstone here just sort of to make him grind his teeth with envy about the books, then?

BRANDON: On the contrary, I'm going to let him have exactly what he wants—provided I don't want it. But I'm telling you all this, Kenneth, just to excuse the terrible mess we're in. You'll observe that we're having our meal off a chest.

RAGLAN: Oh, yes. (*Looks at chest.*) I thought it looked rather weird.

BRANDON: Good Lord, Kenneth. You're getting positively fat.

RAGLAN: Am I?

BRANDON: Nothing like the little boy who used to fag for me at school.

RAGLAN: Lord! That's a while ago.

BRANDON: Oh, it doesn't seem so very long.

RAGLAN: Of course, I used to think you an absolute hero in those days, Brandon.

BRANDON: Did you? Well, as a matter of fact I was always more or less popular amongst the juniors.

GRANILLO: It was I who was the unpopular one.

BRANDON: Were you unpopular, Granno?

RAGLAN: Oh, yes, I remember I used to loathe you in those days.

GRANILLO: There you are.

BRANDON: Why did you loathe him?

RAGLAN: Oh, I don't know. I suppose games were the only things that ever counted in those days. I'm sure it was most unreasonable.

GRANILLO: It was, I assure you. I'm very harmless.

AUDITION SIDES

Side 3 - Leila, and Sir Johnstone join the party with Brandon, Granillo, and Raglan

BRANDON: Now what are you going to have, Leila? Kenneth's having a Gin and It.

LEILA: I'd adore one.

Brandon goes to sideboard. There is a rather awkward silence .Leila is between Raglan and Granillo, and turns and grins at Raglan, who is only too willing to grin at her.

LEILA: Of course, I simply know—that I've seen you somewhere before.

RAGLAN: *(Looking foolish.)* Really?

LEILA: You're not a Frinton-on-Sea expert, are you?

RAGLAN: No. I just go there occasionally, that's all.

LEILA: How weird! Because I could simply swear that I've seen you somewhere before.

RAGLAN: *(Grinning.)* Oh—how weird!

BRANDON: *(Coming down with drink for Leila.)* Previous incarnation, I expect. Here you are, Leila. Excuse mess. We're in a horrible mess here altogether. Kenneth'll tell you about it. I've come into a library.

LEILA: Come into a library, my dear? My dear, how weird!

BRANDON: Yes, And I hope you don't think you're going to get anything to eat, because all the servants are away and we're very humble.

LEILA: No—you told me that, and I had a simply gluttonous high tea. Gorged, my dear!

BRANDON: Oh, well, that's all right. I really wouldn't have asked you—only this is the last chance of seeing you before we go up.

LEILA: Are you going up tonight, then?

BRANDON: Yes.

RAGLAN: Of course, I'm feeling absolutely ghastly—coming dressed like this.

LEILA: Why? I'm sure I ought to be dressed too. *(Turning to Brandon.)* Of course you must admit, my dear, this is a most mysterious and weird meal.

GRANILLO: *(A little too heavily.)* Why mysterious and weird?

LEILA: *(Sensing his heaviness, which causes a faintly embarrassed little pause.)* Oh—I don't know. Just mysterious. And weird. *(Pause.)* Such a queer time, to begin with.

Bell rings.

BRANDON: *(Cutting in rather loudly.)* Here we are. I'll bet you that's old Kentley. Forgive me a moment, I must go and usher him in.

Goes out, leaving door open. Voices from below.

LEILA: *(Softly, rolling her eyes.)* Who's the newcomer?

GRANILLO: *(Rising and putting his cigarette out on table.)* The new-comer, Leila, is the revered Sir Johnstone Kentley, who has come here to look at books.

LEILA: My dear!

GRANILLO: Unless it's Rupert—which it may be, of course.

Goes to door as Brandon, Sir Johnstone Kentley enters.

SIR JOHNSTONE: (*Talking as he enters.*) . . . which, of course, can never be done. Ah, how do you do, Granillo? How are you getting on?

They shake hands.

Raglan is standing sheepishly and Leila does not quite know what to do with herself.

BRANDON: (*Taking stage.*) Now let me introduce you all. . . . This is Miss Leila Arden. . . . Miss Arden—Sir Johnstone Kentley.

LEILA: Howdyoudo.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Howdyoudo.

BRANDON: And this is Mr. Kenneth Raglan.

RAGLAN: Howdyoudo, sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Howdyoudo.

Embarrassed pause. Sabot has come in after Kentley, etc., and is quietly going on with the laying of the chest.

BRANDON: And there we are. And here, Sir Johnstone, is an armchair which I think is more or less in your line. (*Leads him down to it.*) And here is a chest, from which we're going to feed, the table having been commandeered for books.

SIR JOHNSTONE: (*Peering at chest.*) That's not a Cassone, is it?

BRANDON: No, sir. It's not genuine, it's a reproduction. But it's rather a nice piece. I got it in Italy.

Granillo has seen that all are seated, and is now standing at mantelpiece. Sabot is moving about, laying plates, knives, sandwiches, etc. on chest.

(To Sir Johnstone.) Now will you have a cocktail, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE: Good heavens, no, my boy. (*He looks vaguely about the room.*) These books I'm going to see—where are they, Brandon?

BRANDON: (*Going to sideboard again.*) Oh, the books. They're in the other room, the dining-room. I laid them out as well as I could, and there's more space in there.

SIR JOHNSTONE: I shall be interested to see them—most interested. . . . I seem to remember that Wickham had a really remarkable little lot of Shakesperana . . .

BRANDON: Yes.

Bell rings.

Ah...that will be Rupert.

Sabot quickly leaves room.

I'm afraid, Sir Johnstone, the folios were sold before Wickham died. But there's a run of the quartos, and a really amazing lot of Baconian stuff. At least, I'm told it's very fine.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Ah-ha. Bacon, my boy. That's a special favorite of mine.

LEILA: Of course, all this is too technical and peculiar!

RAGLAN: Yes—isn't it?

AUDITION SIDES

Side 4 - Sir Johnstone takes a call and the party later breaks up for the evening (Leila, Raglan, Brandon, Granillo, and Rupert)

SIR JOHNSTONE: Hullo. . . . Hullo. . . . Hullo. . . . Hullo, hullo. . . . (*To others.*) No one here. . . . Oh, hullo—yes? . . . Oh yes. That you, dear? Oh, yes?

The others are perfectly still.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Ye-e-e-es. . . . Ye-e-e-es. . . . No, no . . . he's not here. Yes, yes, that's right.

Granillo enters and immediately sense the silence of the others. Sir Johnstone turns round and looks at them for a moment as he listens, and then turns back again.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Yes, yes. That's quite correct. Quite right, dear. . . . What? Oh, no, no. He'll be back soon, I expect. Probably held up in the . . . What? Oh yes, dear. Well—I'll be back there soon now. I'll be coming pretty well straight away. . . . What? Yes. Right you are. Right you are. . . . Good-bye. (*Puts down receiver. He looks thoughtful, and suddenly a trifle older and more lonely. Pause.*) Ronald hasn't come back. . . .

RUPERT: Hasn't come back?

SIR JOHNSTONE: (*Looking first at Rupert and then in front of him.*) No. . . .

GRANILLO: Oh, that's the storm.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Yes. That's what it must be.

RUPERT: (*Acidly.*) Didn't you say he'd been to the Coliseum?

SIR JOHNSTONE: That's right.

BRANDON: Was he expected back, then, sir?

SIR JOHNSTONE: Yes. Apparently, he arranged to get back to tea. My wife gets so alarmed if there's any hitch.

BRANDON: He'll probably be back by the time you get home.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Yes. . . . yes, I expect he will. (*Brightening.*) Well, I must be off. Where did I leave our hats and coats? Oh—downstairs.

BRANDON: Yes. I'll go and get them.

He goes out. Granillo is drinking again.

LEILA: (*To Sir Johnstone.*) Well—we've got your parcel all ready. (*Shows it to him.*)

SIR JOHNSTONE: Oh—that is sweet of you. Thank you very much. That's a wonderful parcel, isn't it?

LEILA: Well, it's not bad, is it?

SIR JOHNSTONE: I should say not. Yes. . . . (*Rather listless.*) That's very convenient. . . .

Brandon re-enters with Sir Johnstone's hat and coat.

BRANDON: Here you are, Sir Johnstone. And it's not raining now. (*Helping him on with it.*) But I expect you'd like a taxi, wouldn't you?

SIR JOHNSTONE: Yes. I think I'd like a taxi. I'd rather like to get back. I can't think where that boy's got to. . . . Thank you. I've never known him fail when he's said he'd be back.

BRANDON: Then he must be very filial, sir.

SIR JOHNSTONE: Yes. He is. Well, then, it only remains to thank you for the most charming evening, to say nothing of the most charming company, the company being even more delightful than the books, and that's saying an enormous amount. (*Smiles.*) Well. (*To Leila.*) Good night——

LEILA: Good night.

SIR JOHNSTONE: (*To Raglan.*) Good night.

RAGLAN: Good night, sir.

AUDITION SIDES

Side 5 - Rupert confronts Brandon after discovering the body in the chest.

RUPERT: Oh—you swine. . . . (*Wipes his hand across his mouth, his lips at once contemptuous and horror-struck.*) You dirty swine. . . . (*Gives a shuddering sob.*)

BRANDON: (*Quietly.*) Now then, Rupert. Sit down. I want to talk to you.

RUPERT: Poor Ronald Kentley. . . . What had he done to you? (*Comes down a little.*)

BRANDON: Sit down, Rupert. For God's sake sit down. I want to talk to you.

RUPERT: (*Pulling himself together.*) Sit down, Brandon? What do you mean?

BRANDON: (*Louder. He is himself standing.*) Sit down! For God's sake sit down and listen. I want to explain!

RUPERT: Explain?

BRANDON: (*Slightly giving way.*) Oh, sit down. For God's sake sit down! I'm at your mercy, I tell you, I'm at your mercy. Have mercy on me! I can explain! Have mercy on me! Sit down and judge me! Sit down and judge me!

Rupert slowly comes and sits down L.

RUPERT: Well?

Brandon paces up towards window before sitting down. Sits down C. Thinks. Puts face in hands.

BRANDON: Rupert. You're an enlightened man, aren't you?

RUPERT: I profess to be. Yes.

BRANDON: And it is in your power to have me—hanged.

RUPERT: So it seems.

BRANDON: And Granillo too.

RUPERT: And Granillo too.

BRANDON: Rupert.

RUPERT: Yes.

BRANDON: You remember our talk to-night—about the Old Bailey and justice?

RUPERT: Yes. Well.

BRANDON: And the difference between the two. You made the point.

RUPERT: Yes.

BRANDON: Yes. Well. Remember that. You wouldn't be giving us up to justice. And now I want to ask you something else. You are not a man of morals, are you?

RUPERT: No. I'm not.

BRANDON: And you do not rate life as a very precious thing, do you?

RUPERT: No.

BRANDON: Now listen, Rupert. Listen. I have done this thing. I and Granno. We have done it together. We have done it for—for adventure. For adventure and danger. For danger. You read Nietzsche, don't you, Rupert?

RUPERT: Yes.

BRANDON: And you know that he tells us to live dangerously.

RUPERT: Yes.

BRANDON: And you know that he's no more respect for individual life than you, and tells us—to—live dangerously. We thought we would do so—that's all. We have done so. We have only done the thing. Others have talked. We have done. Do you understand?

RUPERT: Go on.

BRANDON: Listen, Rupert, listen. You're understanding, I think. You're the one man to understand. Now apart from all that—quite apart—even if you can't see how we—look at it, you'll see that you can't give us up. Two lives can't recall one. It'd just be triple murder. You would never allow that. But apart from that too—our lives are in your hands. Your hands, man! I give them into your hands. You can't kill us. You can't kill. If you have us up now, it'd be killing us as much as if you were to run us through with that sword in your hand. You're not a murderer, Rupert.

RUPERT: What are you?

BRANDON: We aren't, we aren't, I tell you! Don't tell me you're a slave of your period. In the days of the Borgias you'd have thought nothing of this. For God's sake tell me you're an emancipated man. Rupert, you can't give us up. You know you can't. You can't. You can't! You can't. . . . (*Long pause.*) Can you?

Pause.

RUPERT: Yes, I know. (*Pause.*) There's every truth in what you've said. This is a very queer, dark and incomprehensible universe, and I understand it little. I myself have always tried to apply pure logic to it, and the application of logic can lead us into strange passes. It has done so in this case. You have brought up my own words in my face, and a man should stand by his own words. I shall never trust in logic again. You have said that I hold life cheap. You're right. I do. Your own included. (*Rises.*)

AUDITION SIDES

Side 6 - Rupert questions Sabot

RUPERT: *(Looking up.)* Ah—good evening, Sabot.

SABOT: *(Commencing to clear meal away.)* Good evening, sair.

RUPERT: *(Reading.)* How are you getting on?

SABOT: Very well, thank you, sair.

Sabot continues with his clearing. Rain is heard a little louder.

RUPERT: *(After a pause. Quietly.)* It's going to be a dirty night.

SABOT: Yes, sair. It's set in now, sair.

RUPERT: I suppose Mr. Brandon'll still be going, though.

SABOT: Pardon, sair?

RUPERT: I suppose Mr. Brandon'll still be going though—to Oxford?

SABOT: Oh—yes, sair. I suppose so, sair.

Sabot busies himself with clearing. Rupert all at once puts down book and looks at little ticket again.

RUPERT: Have you any idea of the date, Sabot?

SABOT: Ze date, sair? Yes, sair. It ees zee—er *(Screwing up eyes, just as he is about to remove a large bundle of plates.)*—er—sixteenth, sair.

RUPERT: The——? *(He is about to repeat “the sixteenth” in surprise.)*

SABOT: *(Quickly.)* No, sair! No, sair! It ees not, sair! It ees the seventeenth, sair!

RUPERT: *(Looking quite openly at ticket.)* Yes. I thought so. The seventeenth.

Pause.

RUPERT: Have you been getting into trouble lately, Sabot?

SABOT: Trouble, sair?

RUPERT: Yes. Trouble.

SABOT: Er—trouble, sair?

RUPERT: Uncanny as it may seem, the word I employed, Sabot, was trouble.

SABOT: Er—what kind of trouble, sair?

RUPERT: I was wondering, though, whether you had been getting into any trouble with your employers.

SABOT: Me, sair? No, sair. What should make you think so, sair?

RUPERT: Well, I telephoned this house at a quarter to nine and heard the most hysterical noises.

SABOT: Hysterical noises, sair?

RUPERT: Hysterical—Sabot—noises. Somebody had evidently lost their nerve. I was wondering whether you were the cause of it.

SABOT: Me, sair? No, sair. Not me, sair. I was not here till five to nine.

Long pause. Sabot still clearing.

RUPERT: Then are you the one that frequents the Coliseum, Sabot?

SABOT: The Coliseum, sair? No, sair.

RUPERT: You don't?

SABOT: Zee—er—zee music-hall, sair?

RUPERT: Yes.

SABOT: *(In a puzzled fashion, as though accused, and quite innocently.)* No, sair. . . . No, sair. I have been there once, sair. . . . Many years ago, sair.

RUPERT: But not lately?

SABOT: No, sair.

(Another pause, as Sabot goes on clearing.)

RUPERT: Then is it Mr. Granillo who frequents the Coliseum?

SABOT: Mr. Granillo, sair?

RUPERT: Or is it Mr. Brandon who frequents the place?

SABOT: Mr. Brandon, sair?

Side 7 - Brandon and Granillo express relief the guests didn't suspect anything, but Rupert suddenly appears.

GRANILLO: God! I thought he got on to it.

BRANDON: Who? Rupert?

GRANILLO: Yes.

BRANDON: Yes. So did I. For a few moments. But that's what gave piquancy to the evening. He hadn't.

GRANILLO: You're sure he hadn't?

BRANDON: Quite sure. (*Pause while he drinks.*) I sometimes rather wish he had. God. Rupert. Queer lad. I wonder. (*Reflectively.*) If he had been with us he wouldn't have got drunk, Granno.

GRANILLO: (*Looking up from hands.*) I not drunk. . . . I'm a little blurred, that's all. (*Sits up stiffly.*) Hullo! What's that?

BRANDON: What?

GRANILLO: I thought I heard something.

BRANDON: Be yourself, Granno.

GRANILLO: I thought it was the bell. (*Pause, as both listen.*)

The bell is heard ringing.

It was! It was!

BRANDON: (*Finishing his drink, evenly.*) Well. (*Gulp.*) What of it? (*Carefully finishes drink.*) I'll go see. (*He puts down the glass and goes out.*)

There is a long pause. Granillo looks in front of him steadily. Voices are heard from afar. Suddenly, and obviously steps up the steps are heard, Brandon re-enters. Goes to mantelpiece, rather flustered.

BRANDON: It's Rupert. He's left his cigarette case behind, apparently. Have you seen it?

GRANILLO: No.

BRANDON: (*Looking first at first table, then at chest, then at second table.*) Well, it must be here somewhere.

Rupert appears in doorway. He has his overcoat on, and his hat in his hand, and for a moment he is not seen. Then Brandon sees him.

BRANDON: Hullo. You've come up?

RUPERT: Yes—— (*He slowly takes off his coat, and places it, with his hat, on the divan. Comes down stage.*)

Brandon and Granillo watch him intently.

I thought you might give me another spot. (*Sits down.*)

BRANDON: You're welcome, Rupert. (*Goes to sideboard.*)

RUPERT: (*Calmly producing cigarette case from his hip pocket and holding it up.*) I beg your pardon. Humbly.

BRANDON: (*From sideboard.*) Why? (*Sees.*) Oh! You ass! (*At soda syphon.*) Just a splash, Rupert?

RUPERT: Yes. A generous one. (*Takes cigarette from case and lights it. Takes whisky from Brandon, who sits on chest in center.*) Oh, dear Heaven! What unmentionable fatigue.

BRANDON: What?

RUPERT: Living – living, living. (*He takes a big gulp of his drink.*) I wonder if this is a way out. (*Looking at his glass.*) I shall try Omarism one day.

“The mighty Mahmud, the victorious lord,
Whom all the misbelieving and black horde
Of fears and horrors that infest the soul,
Scatters and slays with his enchanted sword.”

(*During the poem, Granillo nods off in the chair.*)

Granno seems to agree with that.

BRANDON: Yes. But he’s not going to get any more.

RUPERT: You’re in a horrible state tonight, Granillo. You’re positively silent drunk.

GRANILLO: (*Rising and going over to mantelpiece for cigarette.*) Oh—I’m all right. (*Lights cigarette and comes back again. Is walking quite fairly steadily.*)

RUPERT: I say. Must we have all this light?

GRANILLO: What’s wrong with the light?

RUPERT: Nothing is wrong with the light, Granillo. Only I am a creature of half-lights, and seeing that you have a very pleasantly shaded little table lamp, can’t we make use of it?

BRANDON: (*Rising and going to lamp.*) Yes. I quite agree. (*Switches it on and goes over to turn out light by door.*) But I hope you’re not going to settle down too heavily, and make yourself too much at home, because we’ve got to be off before long. (*Light goes out and stage is lit by table lamp only.*)

RUPERT: Ah—that’s better. (*Crossing his legs and leaning back.*) Much better. I am sad tonight, you know. What’s the time?

BRANDON: (*Looks at clock.*) About five-and-twenty to eleven.

RUPERT: Five-and-twenty to eleven. I expect you’re wanting to get rid of me, aren’t you?

BRANDON: Not at all, Rupert.

RUPERT: I hope not. I’m full of melancholy, and don’t want to go home. . . . You must bear with me. . . . It’s been such a strange evening. . . .

BRANDON: Strange evening—why?

GRANILLO: (*Quickly.*) Why strange?

RUPERT: I can’t tell you. That’s my trouble. I suppose it’s the thunder, and one thing and another. (*Drinks.*) Thunder always upsets me. Besides, I’m always melancholy at this hour. Five-and-twenty to eleven. It’s a curious hour. . . . Did you ever read Goldsmith’s “Nightpiece”?

BRANDON: No. I can’t actually recall it.

RUPERT: No? You should. It’s about the city at night. I shall do his “Nightpiece” up to date one of these days. And I shall make it five-and-twenty to eleven. Now. It’s a wonderful hour. I am particularly susceptible to it.