

R O P E

The setting of the story is in an apartment high up in the East Fifties.

The action of the story is continuous; there are no time lapses of any kind.

CHARACTERS

(as they appear)

BRANDON is in his early twenties, tall and of a striking appearance. This is more than mere good looks, more than his lithe, athletic frame, more than his expensively perfect clothes. He has the cool, calm sureness of someone who has always had money, position and the self-certainty that whatever he does is the right thing to do. His charm, his good manners, his appearance, his socially facile tongue would make him eminently likeable if it were not for the evidence of extreme egoism and the obvious touch of arrogance. More, there is a feeling of carefully controlled intensity, brutality almost; a feeling that Brandon is someone to fear. And actually, he is - because Brandon is psychopathic.

PHILLIP is neurotic and the weaker of the two. He is tall, too, but younger than Brandon and better looking. His face, his body, his whole physical being spells sensitivity. Despite his weakness, he is very likeable because of a natural, boyish charm. Inherently, however, Phillip wants to be and needs to be dominated. He tries to resist this, tries to resist his quick and rather extreme changes of mood. But it is difficult for him to be facile and glib, more difficult to control and conceal his feelings. His defense is to withdraw into himself, to drink or to play the piano. He has a good musical talent but he is so unsure of himself, basically, so frightened that his eventual defeat is inevitable.

MRS. WILSON'S age is anyone's guess but she is certainly past fifty, long past. Her arms and legs are cigarette-thin, her hair is frizzy and hennaed and her cheeks are spotted with the wrong shade of rouge. She is myopic and, unfortunately, must wear very thick glasses. She speaks very quietly and softly to suit the role she has chosen for herself; hostess of any house in which she is employed. Any party is her party, anyone's business is her business. She is also a mistress of the non-sequitur and given to rather coy smirking. For all this, she has a genuine fondness for her employers and feels like a mother to them.

KENNETH is a healthily attractive Princeton undergraduate. He is not overly bright but is extremely sweet and immediately likeable. Ordinarily, he is high spirited and cheerfully at ease; Brandon, however, makes him feel uncomfortable. His background of tutors, prep school and Princeton have given him manners and self-possession. He is neither gauche nor shy, and though he does not possess wit himself, he is appreciative of it in others. He is sensitive to other people's feelings and very respondent to them.

...JANET is two or three years older than the boys and very attractive. She is slightly over-chic in the manner of girls who work for magazines like Vogue - which she does. Her speech has the mannerisms and ornamentations of cafe society and so does her manner. Her family was almost 400 and had money until just about the time she entered her teens. Consequently, she now belongs neither to the class she is actually in nor the class she wants to be in. This has left her with a feeling that she must be gay and amusing to pay her way into society and she works hard at it. She would like very much to relax and be what she really is: a rather nice, simple girl whose standards are a bit off but who is fundamentally good.

MR. KENTLEY is a wealthy, middle-aged gentleman with quiet charm and humor. He has great pride in his son and is intelligent and alert. His age and a neurotic wife (who decided to be practically bedridden a few years back) have combined to force him into collecting first editions. This preoccupation, plus his desire to live within himself and his general trust in people of his class mar his perceptivity. Thus, he is blind to Brandon's real nature and to the implications of his son's disappearance.

MRS. ATWATER, his sister-in-law, is an imposing if fatuous woman. She is elegantly over-dressed and has a curious speech which she evidently believes is high society: an almost petulant, childlike drawl with affected English overtones. Mrs. Atwater comes from another city and is on one of her annual visits to New York. She adores parties and, this year, astrology. She is about as observant as the dead and is intensely interested in herself. It is clear, however, that she is very warm-hearted and thus, she is very likeable.

RUPERT CADELL would be the most outstanding person in almost any room. He is in his middle-thirties, tall, grey at the temples and, as result of the last war, walks with a slight limp. He is distinguished in appearance, manner and thought. His clothes are not new but are impeccable and somehow seem better than anyone else's. He manages to convey the romantic feeling of another era and if you met him, you would immediately want him to like you. At the same time, however, you would sense the existence of a wall of reserve which you would know you would not be lucky enough to break through. He is completely self-possessed and elegantly detached. His manners are beautiful, his speech is eloquent and his tongue can be sharp. Yet he has such charm and humor (and a smile) that you cannot really be sure whether he means the extreme ideas he propounds or whether he is joking. Just as you cannot really be sure whether Rupert is essentially good or essentially evil.

SPECIAL LIGHTING NOTE

When the action of the story commences, we see through the large studio window the roofs of cross-town Manhattan. We are facing a Westerly direction. When this panorama is revealed for the first time the sun is just beginning to lower. The light is bright yellow, then as the action continues we see the sun beginning to set and the clouds in the sky take on deeper colors. This light change continues as the clouds move across the sky and finally, when the sun has gone down, we get the strong afterglow. About this time, various neon signs have begun to appear, starting in the far distance and, as the action of the play goes on, the ones nearer to us begin to light up and climactically a large neon sign begins to light up the whole room. This sign is not seen through the big window at the back, but comes from two side windows which face a narrow side street.

R O P E

THE SCREEN is filled with rope: a huge close-up of two crossed strands of ordinary window sash cord. Slowly, the CAMERA begins to move away. The rope is biting into flesh, is being pulled tighter around a young, male throat. The head, twisting back in the almost darkness, is difficult to see. The hands holding the ends of the rope are clearer: two strong, gloves, male hands.

Now there is a choked, gargling gasp and, as the CAMERA continues to retreat, we can see three silhouettes against the broad, high window which is curtained to shut out the daylight. There are three young men; one, the killer; another, the victim; the third, the accessory who is holding the victim's arms. There is a last slight twist - and the victim's head snaps to one side, his body slumps. A pause; nothing, no movement. Vaguely, from the street outside, comes a child's voice calling: "Hey, Mick-ey, come on!" Inside the room, there is suspended breath, then a long exhale and the accessory speaks - softly:

BRANDON:

Open it....

He takes hold of the body as the other, Phillip, lets go of the rope. A moment, then Phillip leans forward and opens the lid of a large chest. There is a slight sound (not a creak) as the lid is raised up. Phillip steps back and takes the body by the feet. Together they lift and lower it into the chest. Immediately, Phillip slams the lid down and sits on the chest, hunched forward, breathing quickly.

THE CAMERA MOVES IN until the screen is filled with the top of the chest. Phillip sitting on it and Brandon standing by him. Brandon slowly straightens up. He takes two long, deep, triumphant breaths, almost growing in height. Then he leans out of scene to a lamp and switches it on.

PHILLIP:

Don't!

Brandon switches off the lamp, stands quiet a second. Then:

BRANDON:

(softly)

We've got to see if there's anything---

PHILLIP:

I know. But - not just yet..Let's stay this way for a minute.

Brandon hesitates, then takes out a gold cigarette case, clicks it open, takes out a cigarette and lights it with a gold lighter. In the brief flare of the flame, we see that he wears soft suede gloves. He goes to Phillip and hands him the cigarette. Phillip, too, wears gloves. Then Brandon takes out another cigarette and lights it for himself.

BRANDON:

Phillip..we don't have too much time.

(no answer)

It's the darkness that's got you down.

He crosses to the large window. Phillip remains in f.g.

BRANDON:

Nobody ever feels really safe in the dark.
(chuckling)

Nobody who was ever a child, that is...
I'll open these, all right?

(no answer, but he opens the
curtains anyway)

There. That's much better.

Late afternoon sun floods the whole room and we can see that it is large and is expensively furnished in unorthodox but extremely good taste. There are three essential pieces in the room; the chest, a grand piano and a liquor table. A big window takes most of one wall; beyond it, a panorama of midtown Manhattan. In the right wall are two smaller windows. From the street below come occasional sounds of traffic, of children, etc.

As Brandon turns from the window and smiles across to Phillip, we can, for the first time, see both of them clearly. They are in their early twenties, good looking, well dressed. Their coloring is different but their contrast is in manner and character, as much as in physical appearance. Brandon has an easy, careless charm which serves, usually to cover his cold superiority and arrogance. He is a rather glib, cultured egomaniac and is psychopathic. Phillip is neurotic and thus, weaker. He is naturally more boyish and is given to quick and extreme changes of mood - up and down, volatile and withdrawn, sensitive and sarcastic. He is neither as glib, as brilliant, nor as poised as Brandon. He drinks heavily.

At this moment, he is sitting motionless on the chest, not smoking the cigarette in his gloved hand. Brandon opens a section of the window and starts to take off his gloves with a smile.

BRANDON:

What a lovely evening!
(coming to Phillip)
A pity we couldn't have
done it with the curtains open...
in the bright sunlight.

A look at the chest, then he takes Phillip's gloves off for him.

BRANDON:

Well...you can't have everything...
and we did do it in daytime....
All right now, Phillip?

PHILLIP:

Yes.

BRANDON:

Good...You'd better put these away,

He hands both pairs of gloves to Phillip. With an almost mechanical obedience, Phillip takes the gloves, gets up and then looks about for a hiding place. Brandon picks up the look, then sees the desk between the two windows.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK and opens up the scene.

BRANDON:

Put them in my checkbook drawer,
Behind that metal box.

As Phillip does so, Brandon humming a bright little tune, goes to the side windows and opens curtains then to a small table by an armchair, which someone has obviously been sitting in. He bumps up the cushions and picks up a highball glass.

BRANDON:

You know, this is a museum piece now.
We really should preserve it for posterity...except it's such good crystal
and I'd hate to break up the set.

(holding up the glass)

Out of this, David Kentley had his last drink. It should've been ginger ale. Or even beer. I've always felt it was out of character for David to drink anything as corrupt as whiskey,

PHILLIP:

(tensely)

Out of character for him to be murdered, too.

BRANDON:

(laughs)

Yes, wasn't it? Good Americans usually die young on the battlefield, don't they?

(he is beginning to enjoy himself now and rattles on, stuttering slightly in his happy excitement)

Well, the Davids of this world merely occupy space. Which is why he was the perfect victim for the perfect murder...of course, he was a Harvard undergraduate. That might make it justifiable homicide.

(he laughs at his joke, then looks up)

PHILLIP:

He's dead and we've killed him. But he's still here!

BRANDON:

In less than eight hours, he'll be resting gently but firmly at the bottom of a lake.

PHILLIP:

Meanwhile he's here.

He moves as though to bend down to the chest.

BRANDON:

What are you doing?

PHILLIP:

It's not locked.

BRANDON:

All the better! It's much more dangerous...Anyway, the lock's too old. It won't work.

PHILLIP:

I wish it would. I wish we had him out of here. I wish he were somebody else.

BRANDON:

It's a trifle late for that, don't you think? Whom would you have preferred? Kenneth?

PHILLIP:

I don't know. I suppose anyone was
as good - or as bad as any other.

(suddenly looking at Brandon)

You perhaps.

(a pause. They look directly
at each other)

You scare me. You always have. From
that very first day in prep school.
Part of your charm, I suppose.

(suddenly smiling)

I'm only kidding, Brandon. I obviously
can't take it as well as you so...I'm
turning on you a little.

BRANDON:

(quietly)

That's rather foolish, isn't it?

PHILLIP:

Yes. Very.

(he starts for the drink
table, stops, and turns
to Brandon)

May I...have a drink now?

BRANDON:

By all means! This is an occasion.
It calls for champagne.

PHILLIP:

Champagne!

BRANDON:

I've put some in the icebox.

The CAMERA MOVES IN until they are both in Medium
Shot. It follows them across the room, across the
hallway, and allows them to get ahead as they move
through the dining room toward the kitchen.

PHILLIP:

When did you put it there, Brandon?

BRANDON:

Oh...just before David arrived.

PHILLIP:

You were certain it would come off,
weren't you?

BRANDON: (gaily)

Of course! You know I'd never do any-
thing unless I did it perfectly. I've
always wished for more artistic talent
...but murder can be an art, too. The
power to kill can be as satisfying as
the power to create.

6.
He pushes open and jams the swinging door of the kitchen and goes to the icebox. He takes out a bottle of champagne and turns to Phillip who has followed. During following, he also tests the temperature of the champagne.

BRANDON:

Phillip, do you realize we've actually done it? Exactly as we planned!. Not a single infinitesimal thing has gone wrong. It was perfect!

PHILLIP:

Yes.

BRANDON:

An immaculate murder. We've killed for the sake of danger and for the sake of killing. And we're alive. Truly and wonderfully alive!

(going into the dining room now, Phillip following)

Phillip, even champagne isn't equal to us or the occasion!

PHILLIP:

I'll take it, though.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal the dining table is laid out for a buffet party. Brandon takes two glasses from those on the table.

BRANDON:

You're not frightened anymore, are you?

(opening the bottle)

You can't really have fear. Neither of us can. That's the difference between us and the ordinary man, Phillip. They talk about committing the perfect crime. But nobody does it. Nobody commits a murder...

He is having trouble with the cork. Phillip takes the bottle.

PHILLIP:

Here.

BRANDON:

(going right on)

- just for the experiment of committing it. Nobody except us.

(the bottle is opened)

You're not frightened anymore, are you, Phillip?

PHILLIP:
(pouring out the wine)

No.

BRANDON:
(a smile)
Not even of me?

PHILLIP:
No.

BRANDON:
That's good.

PHILLIP:
You just...astound me. As always.

BRANDON:
That's even better.

He takes the glass of champagne Phillip holds out to him. Together, they raise their glasses.

BRANDON:
(nodding in the direction
of the living room)
To David, of course.

He smiles and drinks. Phillip says nothing takes a much longer swallow.

PHILLIP:
Brandon...how did you feel?

BRANDON:
When?

PHILLIP:
During it.

A slight pause.

BRANDON:
I don't know really...I don't
remember feeling very much of
anything until his body went limp
and I knew it was over.

PHILLIP:
And then?

BRANDON:
Then...I felt tremendously
exhilarated.
(stuttering again)
...How did you feel?

The CAMERA PULLS BACK AND LOWERS to open up the scene as Brandon moves away to make a minor adjustment to the table. Phillip looks at him, takes another drink. During the following, Brandon moves a spoon here, a plate there, fixes a flower, etc.

PHILLIP:

Oh...Brandon...You don't think the party's a mistake, do you?

BRANDON:

No! Phillip, the party is the inspired finishing touch to our work. It's more. It's the signature of the artist. Why not having it would be like...oh...

PHILLIP:

Painting the picture and not hanging it.

BRANDON:

(laughing)

I don't think that's a very good choice of words.

PHILLIP:

It may turn out to be a little too choice...thanks to the party.

BRANDON:

Rot. This party will be the most exciting ever given.

PHILLIP:

With these people?

BRANDON:

Oh, they're a dull crew, all right. The Kentleys couldn't be duller if they tried. But we did have to have them. After all, they are David's mother and father.

PHILLIP:

That doesn't make them any easier to talk to.

BRANDON:
Don't worry. Janet'll be
buttering them up, poor girl...

Brandon has found that one of the candles is not secure in its candlestick. He takes it out and with his lighter, begins to melt the bottom to make it more secure in the holder.

BRANDON:
She's banked everything on
hooking David. But somehow.....
I don't think she's going to
succeed. Do you?

PHILLIP:
No, somehow I don't.

BRANDON:
(laughs)
Well...she can switch back to
Kenneth tonight. You must admit
it was most considerate of me -
in view of - ah - recent events -
to provide her with a - Phillip!

PHILLIP:
What?

Brandon picks up the candlestick nearest him and
points to the other. ..

BRANDON:
Take the other one.

PHILLIP:
What for?

BRANDON:
Never mind, come with me.

He picks up the other candlestick and starts quickly for the living room.

PHILLIP:
What's this all about?

BRANDON:
You'll see... It's brilliant!

The CAMERA LEADS them to the chest in the living room. Now Brandon puts one candlestick down at one end of the chest and the other at the other end.

PHILLIP:
What the devil are you doing?

BRANDON:
Making our work of art a masterpiece.

PHILLIP:
(reaching for
one of the
candlesticks)
Brandon, you're going too far!

BRANDON:
(stopping him)
Why, what do you mean? I just
thought it would be nice to have
supper in here. On this.

A pause.

PHILLIP:
Isn't it a good idea?

BRANDON:
(smiling)
I don't think you appreciate me,
Phillip.

PHILLIP:
I'm beginning to, Brandon...
Well, come on.
(going to dining
room)

PHILLIP: (Cont.)

We don't have very much time.
Mrs. Wilson will be back soon.

The CAMERA GOES WITH THEM to the dining room where they gather up plates and silverware during the dialogue.

BRANDON:

(turns swiftly)
Did you forget to borrow her key?
...I might have known better than to -

PHILLIP:

I didn't forget, I have her key
and I told her I lost mine.

BRANDON:

Good,

PHILLIP:

How are you going to explain this
to her?

BRANDON:

I'm not.

PHILLIP:

We've got to have some excuse.

BRANDON:

We don't want to leave our guest
of honor alone during supper.

He goes back to the living room with an armful of
plates. Phillip, also carrying a load.

PHILLIP:

Brandon, we've got to have an
excuse - for the others!

BRANDON:

All right... let me think, then.

He puts the plates down on the chest and looks around.
Slowly, he smiles.

BRANDON:

Really, you get much too upset much
too easily, Phillip.

(steps to one end
of the chest)

...We have a very simple excuse.
Right here.

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12.

Next to the chest are several piles of old books. Brandon reaches down and picks up a few of them. Phillip looks at him puzzled.

BRANDON:

After all, old Mr. Kentley is coming mainly to look at these books. What could be better than to have them laid out neatly on the dining room table...where the poor old man can easily get at them.

(he smiles)

Considerate, aren't we? Most con---

The doorbell buzz stops him. He and Phillip turn their heads to the foyer and stand quite still. A pause, then Brandon goes slowly into the hall. Phillip remains where he is and it is from HIS ANGLE that we see Brandon pick up the hall telephone.

BRANDON:

Hello?... Oh, of course.

He hangs up and presses the buzzer, then comes to the doorway.

BRANDON:

You start on the books. I'll---

PHILLIP:

Who is it?

BRANDON:

(casually)

Oh, Mrs. Wilson.

He smiles and turns and goes out of scene toward the dining room. Phillip glares after him, then walks to the pile of books.

The CAMERA PANS DOWN. Phillip bends into the scene to pick up a few of them, then he sees something dangling out of the chest and freezes. It is the piece of rope. He straightens up and stares at it. Then, in a thin whisper:

-- PHILLIP:
 Brandon... --
 (no answer, a pause;
 then almost a shout)
 BRANDON!

He straightens up. The CAMERA MOVES AROUND him as he stares down at the rope. In the distance we see Brandon crossing the hallway.

BRANDON:
 What the devil -- Don't you
 have any more sense than to--

He is in the doorway now, carrying more plates. He stops as he sees Phillip, staring at the chest.

BRANDON:
 (slightly hushed)
 What is it?

Phillip tries to talk but cannot. He cannot move, either. Brandon comes over, worried, then sees the rope.

BRANDON:
 Well, yank it out.
 (pause)
 Go on!

PHILLIP:
 -- (low)
 I can't!

BRANDON:
 (putting plates down
 on chest)
 If Mrs. Wilson were here, she'd
 yank it out for you!
 (he does so;
 then picks up the
 books and thrusts them
 into Phillip's arms)
 A stupid display like that in --
 front of someone else will be as
 good as a confession. Now take
 these and get hold of yourself!

The CAMERA MOVES AWAY as Brandon gathers up more books and follows Phillip to the dining room.

BRANDON:
 If you had let me keep the light
 on before as I wanted, I would
 have seen the---

PHILLIP:
All right! You're perfect!

BRANDON:
(reassuringly)
We have to be, Phillip! We agreed
there was only one crime either of
us could commit: the crime of
making a mistake! Being weak is a
mistake!

The doorbell rings.

PHILLIP:
(slamming his books
down on the table)
Because it's being human?!

BRANDON:
Because it's being ordinary! I
won't let either of us stoop to ---

The doorbell rings again impatiently, cutting him off.
He looks at Phillip, puts his books down and CAMERA
FOLLOWING goes into the hall and opens the door for
Mrs. Wilson. She is middle-aged with cigarette-thin
arms and legs, frizzly hennaed hair and thick glasses.
She is carrying several paper packages. She speaks
very quietly in sort of a simper.

MRS. WILSON:
You owe me two dollars and forty
cents for taxis, including tip.
(as she comes in)
If it weren't for the traffic, I'd
have been here half an hour ago.

BRANDON:
(closing the door)
Oh, it's just as well. I didn't
really expect you back until now.

MRS. WILSON:
I went to five stores for that
special paté we like - but the prices!
Good grief. I didn't see any reason
for throwing away our good money...

Brandon has had the rope coiled up in his hand. Now,
however, it has uncoiled so that a short piece is
dangling down. Neither he nor Mrs. Wilson notices.

MRS. WILSON:
...so I went downtown to that little
delicatessen where Mr. Cadell goes.
But I tell you, the next time we give
a party, we're only going to serve---

She is in the doorway to the dining room and what she sees makes her stop with her mouth open. It remains that way as Phillip comes out carrying silverware and the tablecloth.

PHILLIP:

Good evening, Mrs. Wilson.

She watches him cross into the living room, then turns to Brandon.

MRS. WILSON:

What, may I ask, is happening to my table?

BRANDON:

We're just moving the things in here.

He bows her into the living room. She shoots him a look, then walks in, CAMERA FOLLOWING. Phillip is clearing the things off the top of the chest and putting them on the floor temporarily so that the cloth can be laid on the chest. Brandon goes to help.

MRS. WILSON:

(hurt)

I personally thought my table was quite lovely.

BRANDON:

It was quite lovely. But you see, Mr. Kentley is coming to look at those old books I had in the chest and I'm sure you wouldn't want the poor old man to get down on his knees to see them.

During this, he has picked up an end of the tablecloth. Phillip has the other end, together, they lay it on the chest - like a cloth being laid over a bier.

MRS. WILSON:

(as the cloth is laid)

Well, I think it looks downright peculiar.

BRANDON:

Peculiar?

Phillip now sees the strand of rope coiled around Brandon's hand. He tried to signal Brandon but the latter merely picks up a candlestick and puts it on the chest.

MRS. WILSON:

Very peculiar. Particularly those candlesticks. They don't belong there at all.

BRANDON:

On the contrary! I think they suggest a ... ceremonial altar.

(smiling)

Which you can heap with the foods for our sacrificial feast.

MRS. WILSON:

Heap is right. There certainly isn't enough room for me to set things out properly, is there, Mr. Phillip?

PHILLIP:

(still trying to signal)

You can make it do.

MRS. WILSON:

Oh, you two will be the death of me! What's to be done with the books?

BRANDON:

We'll lay them out on the dining room table.

MRS. WILSON:

It's a crazy idea if you ask me.

Brandon now catches Phillip's signal but doesn't understand it.

MRS. WILSON:

Well, I have too much to do -

(en route to the door)

to discuss this thoroughly, dear.

(turning back)

However, I still think it's peculiar.

The moment she is out, Brandon turns to Phillip.

BRANDON:

What on earth's the matter,

PHILLIP:

I was sure she'd notice.

BRANDON:

Notice what?

PHILLIP:

(indicating)

The rope, of course! Brandon, we've got to hide it!

BRANDON:

Why?

PHILLIP:

Why???

BRANDON:

Yes, why?

(toying with it)

It's only a piece of rope, Phillip.

An ordinary household article.

Why hide it? It belongs in a
kitchen drawer.

He gives the rope a final flip and goes to the kitchen,
CAMERA WITH HIM. The swinging door opens and Mrs. Wilson
comes out, putting her apron on. Brandon goes in and
through the door, which keeps swinging to and fro, we see
him open a drawer, toss in the rope, and shut the drawer
again. Mrs. Wilson is at the sideboard, getting out
carving knives, serving spoons, etc. From the kitchen:

BRANDON:

(as he walks)

Mrs. Wilson ...

MRS. WILSON:

Yes?

BRANDON:

(coming out)

There's champagne in the icebox.

MRS. WILSON:

We're not giving them champagne?!!

BRANDON:

We are.

MRS. WILSON:

Oh. Well, if it's going to be that
kind of a party, I'd better doll up.

THE CAMERA IS FURTHER BACK NOW. Phillip has come into
the room with an armful of books which he puts by the
others on the table. He then picks up the opened
champagne bottle and pours himself another glass.
Brandon, who is spreading out the books, watches this.
Mrs. Wilson, at the sideboard, chatters on.

MRS. WILSON:

We only served champagne at Mr.
Cadell's on very high occasions.
Matter of fact, he and I once had
a glass together;
(a smirk)

On my birthday.

BRANDON:

Tonight, Mrs. Wilson, you'll have an opportunity to renew that romance.

Phillip has set down his glass to help arrange the books. During the last, Brandon casually picks it up.

BRANDON:

May I?

He makes a pretense of taking a sip but puts the glass down out of Phillip's reach and continues to Mrs. Wilson -

BRANDON:

Mr. Cadell's coming.

MRS. WILSON:

(another smirk)

Oh...Mr. Cadell's terribly nice.

PHILLIP:

(startled)

Rupert's coming?

BRANDON:

Yes. I thought I told you.

PHILLIP:

(cold anger)

No. You didn't.

He turns and walks out of the room. Brandon looks at him, puts down a book and, picking up the last of the stuff to go on the chest, leaves. Mrs. Wilson, oblivious, keeps on chattering.

MRS. WILSON:

I must say I did enjoy working for Mr. Cadell. Such a gentleman! Of course, some people say he's a little peculiar, but I personally think....

She looks up. Brandon has walked out. THE CAMERA GOES with him.

MRS. WILSON:

(hurt)

Well!

She stalks out of scene toward the kitchen.

THE CAMERA ARRIVES at the chest where Phillip is fixing the plates, etc.

BRANDON:
I thought you liked Rupert.

PHILLIP:
(coldly)
I do.

BRANDON:
Well then?

PHILLIP:
Brandon, of all the people on this earth, Rupert Cadell is the one man who's most likely to suspect.

BRANDON:
And he's the one man who might see this from our angle: the artistic one! That's what's exciting!

PHILLIP:
I'm glad it excites you! It frightens me! I know Rupert -

BRANDON:
I suggest you keep your voice down!
(a second's pause, then;
in a warmer tone)
It would have been too easy with just the others, Phillip. And too dull. As for Rupert...I once thought of inviting him to join us.

PHILLIP:
Why didn't you? The more the merrier!

BRANDON:
Because Rupert hasn't the nerve! ... Oh, intellectually, he could have come along. He's brilliant - but he's a little too fastidious. He could have invented and he could have admired... but he could never have acted. That's where we're superior, Phillip. We have courage. Rupert doesn't.

During this last, THE CAMERA HAS MOVED AWAY TO show Mrs. Wilson entering with a tray on which there are dishes of olives, stuffed celery, etc. During the following, she brings it over to the chest and, with the help of the boys, sets it out and arranges the "table."

MRS. WILSON:
Mr. Cadell got a bad leg in the war for his courage.

Under the next, the door bell buzzes. Brandon goes out to the hall to press the buzzer.

MRS. WILSON:

And you've got your sleeve in the celery.

(the doorbell rings)

Oh they're here! Are we ready?

PHILLIP:

As ready as we'll ever be.

Mrs. Wilson has started hurrying to the door, but now she walks back. Brandon re-enters.

MRS. WILSON:

(to Phillip)

Now mind you. Don't be so busy at that piano that you don't eat anything. You're getting too thin.

(to Brandon)

And don't you let them gobble up all that paté before you have any. Well...let's hope it's a success. Oh! My tray!

She makes a panic stricken dive for it and looks around for some place to put it out of sight.

BRANDON:

(smiling)

Take it in the kitchen. I'll open the door.

MRS. WILSON:

(as she hurries out)

There wouldn't have been this last minute hustle-bustle if you'd kept my table and put those old books...

Over this, Brandon has been walking to the foyer. He pauses in the doorway and turns back to Phillip.

BRANDON:

Now the fun begins -

He goes out. Off screen, we hear the door being opened. Then, Brandon: "Hello, come in!" Kenneth: "How are you, Brandon?" "Fine. Just drop your hat there." "Thanks." "Been quite awhile, hasn't it?" "Yes. That's why I sounded so - stupid when you phoned. Surprise, I guess." During this, Phillip is bending over the chest. Suddenly he stoops to the lock and tries to snap it into position.

But the lock is too old; it will not hold. Phillip tries feverishly, then hears the others coming. He has just managed to be up (CAMERA RISING WITH HIM) when Brandon returns with Kenneth.

Kenneth is a healthily attractive Princeton undergraduate. He is not overly bright, but is pleasant, has a cheerful sort of charm and is ordinarily always comfortable. With these two, however, he feels awkward and uneasy.

P PHILLIP:

Hello, Kenneth. Good to see you.

(goes to him)

KENNETH:

(shaking hands)

You, too...Been up to much lately?

PHILLIP:

(o.s.)

Nothing to speak of. You?

KENNETH:

Just trying to get ready for exams

(a smile)

I always have to start cramming before anybody else... Say, am I the first?

BRANDON:

You are,

KENNETH:

Why is it I'm always too early at parties?

BRANDON:

Probably because you're always on time.

(calling)

Mrs. Wilson - champagne!

KENNETH:
(a worried look)
It isn't someone's birthday, is it?

BRANDON:
(laughing)
Don't look so worried, Kenneth. It's really almost the opposite.

KENNETH:
The opposite?!

BRANDON:
Phillip's bidding the world a temporary farewell tonight. I'm driving him up to Connecticut right after the party.

KENNETH:
Oh, where're you going?

PHILLIP:
Just to Brandon's mother's place for a few weeks. I'm to be locked up.

KENNETH:
What?!

BRANDON:
To make certain he practises six hours a day.
(the doorbell buzzes under:)
I've finally wangled a debut for him.

PHILLIP:
In Town Hall, at that.

KENNETH:
That's wonderful! I hope you knock 'em dead.

PHILLIP:
Thank you.

Mrs. Wilson enters with the bottle of champagne in an ice bucket. She gives it to Brandon who looks quizzically at the flowers which have suddenly appeared in her hair.

BRANDON:
Most decorative.

MRS. WILSON:
(coyly)
Think so?

She goes out. Brandon pours Kenneth a glass of champagne and hands it to him during the following: Kenneth has been wandering about and now looks at the chest.

KENNETH:

Say...!

PHILLIP:

What is it?

KENNETH:

I feel pretty honored.

BRANDON:

Oh? Why?

KENNETH:

Looks like this is a pretty small farewell party.

BRANDON:

Oh, we're really killing two birds with one stone. The party's also for Mr. Kentley.

KENNETH:

David's father?

PHILLIP:

Yes.

KENNETH:

(nervously)

Oh...Will - David be here?

BRANDON:

Of course!

KENNETH:

...Who else is coming?

BRANDON:

No one you don't know...if that's what's bothering you. The Kentleys, Janet Walker --

KENNETH:

Janet?

BRANDON:

Yes. I thought you'd be glad to see her.

(no answer)

Won't you be?

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KENNETH:
Brandon...Janet and I are all
washed up. Didn't you know?

BRANDON:
I'm sorry, Kenneth. I didn't.

KENNETH:
You knew, Phillip.

PHILLIP:
I heard vague rumors... but I never
pay attention to that sort of thing.
(the doorbell rings)

KENNETH:
I wish you had.

PHILLIP:
Why?

KENNETH:
Well...you see, Janet and David are...
(he holds out his glass)
May I?

PHILLIP:
Help yourself.

BRANDON:
And cheer up. I have the oddest
feeling, anyway, that your chances
with the lady are much better than
you think.

KENNETH:
What do you mean?

Under the last lines, the sound of the door opening
off, and, faintly, the voices of Mrs. Wilson greeting
Janet. "Hello, Mrs. Wilson." "My, you look sweet, dear."
Let me take your coat." "Thank you." "It's very pretty."
"Aren't you sweet!" - Now, before Kenneth's question
can be answered, we hear

JANET:
Hello, ducks!

Kenneth looks up, then turns away to pour his
champagne. THE CAMERA MOVES to show Janet Walker
coming into the room. She is slightly older than the
boys, attractive and done up in the slightly over-chic
manner of girls who work for magazines like Vogue -
which she does. Janet feels she must be gay and

amusing to pay her way into society and so she works at it. Her standards are off but actually, she is a rather nice, simple girl at bottom who would like to relax. Brandon goes to greet her.

BRANDON:

Janet!

JANET:

(throws her arms around
him and offers her
cheek for a kiss)

Angel!.....Be careful of my hair.
It took hours...Oh, you smell
dreamy! What is it?

BRANDON:

That swill you gave me last
Christmas.

JANET:

I always know I had good taste.

BRANDON:

You do. You look lovely.

JANET:

I won't by the time it's all
paid for.

(he laughs)

Was that funny? I never know
I'm being funny. Whenever I try
to be -

(moving to Phillip
now)

I lay the bomb of all time.
Phillip, sweetie!

(again the embrace
and the cheek to
be kissed)

PHILLIP:

Hello...

JANET:

What's this rumor I heard about
you and Town Hall? I'll bet
you're going to play a foul trick
on all of us -

(she is turning now
and as she sees Kenneth
her voice and gaiety run
down)

- and become...horribly famous.
(a pause)

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BRANDON'S VOICE:
I believe you've met.

JANET:
(quietly)
Hello, Ken...

KENNETH:
Hello, Jan...
(pause)

JANET:
Well, that was fascinating, wasn't it?
(to the others)
I seem to have run down.

BRANDON:
What would you say to some champagne?

JANET:
Hello, champagne.
(no one laughs)
You see what I mean about trying to
be funny....How've you been, Ken?

KENNETH:
Fine, thanks...How's the new job?

PHILLIP:
What are you doing?

JANET:
Writing that same dreary column on
"How to Keep the Body Beautiful."

PHILLIP:
For whom this time?

JANET:
Oh. An untidy little fashion magazine.
(Brandon comes up with
her drink)
Thanks, chum. Isn't that painting new?
(she goes to one)

THE CAMERA FOLLOWS.

BRANDON:
Yes. Do you like it?
(he comes over)

JANET:
Well - what is it?

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BRANDON:
A new Young American Primitive.

JANET:
I have a new young American sister.
She's only three and her stuff is
really primitive.
(sotto voce)
- you dirty dog.

BRANDON:
(sotto)
Why?

JANET:
(aloud)
Didn't I notice another new one
in the foyer when I came in?
(she walks out to foyer)

BRANDON:
(following)
I don't think so. Which?

JANET'S VOICE:
This.

THE CAMERA AND Brandon turn into the foyer to
find her pointing to a perfectly blank space.

JANET:
(turning to him; low)
I could really strangle you, Brandon.

BRANDON:
What have I done now?

JANET:
At times your sense of humor is a
little too malicious, chum.

BRANDON:
What are you chattering about?

JANET:
Why did you invite Kenneth?

BRANDON:
Why not?

JANET:
You know perfectly well why not! We
called it quits ages ago and I'm
practically engaged to his best friend.

BRANDON:
(raised eyebrows)
David?

JANET:

Yes, David. Which makes everything
just ginger peachy!

BRANDON:

I'm terribly sorry, but its a little
difficult to keep up with your ro-
mances. After me came Kenneth. Now
it's David..... Why the switch from
Kenneth to David anyway?

JANET:

Obviously, I think he's nicer.

BRANDON:

Well, he's certainly richer.

JANET:

(a pause, then:)

That's a new low even for you, chum.
(she turns and goes back
to the living room,
CAMERA FOLLOWING)

How many years has it been since I
said: "Ooh, it tickles!"
(turning to Brandon
who is behind her)
And don't you tell me.

KENNETH:

(to Brandon)

I hear Rupert's coming.

BRANDON:

He was invited - but you never know
with Rupert.

KENNETH:

I hope he does come. How is he?

JANET:

Who is he?

(the doorbell buzzes
under ff.)

PHILLIP

Rupert Cadell. He was our housemaster
at Prep School.

JANET:

Housemaster for you three little
dears?

BRANDON

Four little dears. He tried valiantly to teach David, too.

KENNETH

(hastily)

Rupert's a publisher now, isn't he?

JANET

Successful? Maybe he can give me a job.

PHILLIP

Rupert only publishes books he likes. Usually philosophy.

JANET

Oh. Small print, big words, no sales.

PHILLIP

Right.

BRANDON

Well, Rupert's extremely radical. Do you know he selects his books on the assumption that people not only can read, but actually can think?! Curious fellow ... but I like him.

KENNETH

You always did. Golly, those bull sessions you and Rupert used to have at school.

(to Janet)

Brandon'd sit up til all hours at the master's feet....

JANET

Brandon at someone's feet? Who is this Rupert?!

KENNETH

(to Brandon)

He used to tell you the weirdest things, didn't he?

JANET

(eagerly)

Really? What sort of things?

BRANDON

Oh, I suppose Kenneth means Rupert's impatience with social conventions. For example -

(looking at Phillip)

- he thinks murder is a crime for most men, but....

PHILLIP

(defiantly)

- a privilege for the few.

The doorbell rings under:

BRANDON

(smiles)

Yes.

He goes to the foyer, CAMERA WITH HIM. Over this:

JANET'S VOICE

A privilege for what few?

KENNETH'S VOICE

The supermen. Or something.

JANET'S VOICE

Schoolboy talk. If all you moppets really did everything you talked about in prep school, this world would be bedlam.

PHILLIP'S VOICE

Isn't it?

During this, Brandon and the CAMERA have reached the foyer, and Mrs. Wilson has appeared there from the dining room.

MRS. WILSON

(murmuring to herself)

Well, I've searched high and low.
I don't know where it is.

Brandon looks at her and shrugs. Mrs. Wilson opens the door. Mr. Kentley and a large, imposing woman stand there. Brandon steps forward.

BRANDON

Mr. Kentley! I'm so glad you could come.

KENTLEY

Thank you, Brandon. Mrs. Kentley isn't well so I took the liberty of bringing my sister-in-law, Mrs. Atwater. She's been staying with us.

BRANDON

Delighted to have you, Mrs. Atwater.

During the following, they come into the foyer. Brandon helps Mr. Kentley with his things, Mrs. Wilson helps Mrs. Atwater. Kenneth's hat is lying on a chair. Mrs. Wilson picks it up and puts it in the closet along with Mr. Kentley's. The conversations frequently overlap. Mrs. Atwater, who is a little over-elegantly dressed, speaks in an almost petulant, childlike drawl.

MRS. ATWATER

Delighted to come, dear boy. I've been in New York two weeks. Alice has been ill almost the whole time and Henry's forever cataloging his library.

KENTLEY

(a slight smile)

Oh, no, Anita. Occasionally, I even read some of my books...

MRS. ATWATER

But I'm on a visit, Henry, and this is just my second party. Of course, I suppose it is only fair....

MRS. WILSON

Let me take your things, dear.

MRS. ATWATER

Thank you.

BRANDON

(simultaneously with Wilson)
I'm sorry to hear Mrs. Kentley is ill.

KENTLEY

It's just a cold.

Mrs. Wilson is wrestling with Mrs. Atwater's coat.

MRS. WILSON

(to Kentley)

Colds can be very dangerous this time of the year. I hope Mrs. Kentley is staying in bed with lots of fruit juice.

KENTLEY

(shooting her an amused look)

She is, thank you.

MRS. WILSON

That'll do the trick.

KENTLEY

(to Brandon)

It was most kind of you to invite me to see your books, Brandon.

BRANDON

Not really. I'm afraid I merely wanted to show off to someone who really knows first editions.

MRS. ATWATER

(to Wilson - simultaneously)

with Kentley's line to Brandon)

Colds dangerous in this heat? I don't understand that at all.

MRS. WILSON

Exactly two years ago this summer, I had one myself. I was down for three weeks. The doctors were ready to give up when I -

BRANDON

This way, Mrs. Atwater.

MRS. ATWATER

Excuse me.

She goes into the living room, Kenneth and Brandon following. THE CAMERA QUICKLY AHEAD of them so that we get a Medium Shot of Mrs. Atwater alone. She is obviously nearsighted because she screws up her eyes and peers into the room.

MRS. ATWATER

David!

At this split second, Brandon is slightly behind her. He is stopped for a moment. Then THE CAMERA SWINGS QUICKLY into the room, showing that she has addressed her greeting to Kenneth. Mrs. Atwater dashes into the picture with outstretched hand toward him. Brandon follows her quickly and is soon alongside of her.

BRANDON

No. This is Mr. Turner, Mrs. Atwater.

THE CAMERA HAS BEEN MOVED FORWARD and goes right past the group and up to Phillip in time to show a closeup of the champagne glass in his hand. His reaction to Mrs. Atwater's error has been so intense that he has snapped the stem of a glass. Blood appears on his hand.

The CAMERA TILTS UP to see him putting the broken glass on a table. He wraps a handkerchief around the cut and steps forward to be introduced. Over this we hear:

MRS. ATWATER'S VOICE

Oh, forgive me.

KENTLEY'S VOICE

It's all right, Anita. Kenneth has been mistaken for David many times ... even by people who aren't near-sighted.

(to Kenneth)

We haven't had much opportunity to observe the resemblance lately, my boy.

(humorously)

Haven't been studying, have you?

KENNETH

I've been trying to.

KENTLEY

(a mock sigh)

The resemblance is only physical.

BRANDON

I'm sure you both know Miss Walker.

MRS. ATWATER

Janet, my dear, I finished working out your horoscope just before we left.

JANET

Oh, tell!

MRS. ATWATER

The stars are very kind to you.
They indicate a marriage very soon.
To a tall, blonde young man -
 (a look at Kentley)
- with a very lovely father.

KENTLEY

Now, Anita, I told you all that a
week ago.

MRS. ATWATER

Well, I suppose you did ... but the
stars confirm it.

JANET

Wonderful!

BRANDON

Mrs. Atwater ... may I present
Mr. Phillip Morgan.

PHILLIP

How do you do?

MRS. ATWATER

Oh, your poor hand!.....

PHILLIP

It's nothing. Just a little cut.

BRANDON

What happened?

PHILLIP

Nothing. The glass was cracked and
it broke, that's all. May I get you
some champagne, Mrs. Atwater?

MRS. ATWATER

I'd adore some. Daddy used to have
a glass every morning at eleven.
Of course, Henry.....

BRANDON

May I get you some, Mr. Kentley?

KENTLEY

I'd prefer a little scotch with a
lot of water, Brandon.....

(sits)

Isn't David here?

Brandon has started for the drink, but he stops.

BRANDON

I expected him to come with you.

KENTLEY

He called and said he would meet us here.

JANET

Where'd he call from?

Brandon goes. THE CAMERA MOVES IN on Kentley and Janet, seated on window seat. She is more subdued with him, very much on her good behavior and trying to please.

KENTLEY

(shrugs)

Our maid spoke to him. He was probably at the club ... studying for his examinations in tennis.

JANET

Trouble with David is he doesn't have to study. He's too bright.

KENTLEY

Well ... he does all right.
(taking her hand)
Very much so.

JANET

Thank you... How's Mrs. Kentley?

KENTLEY

As usual. It's a cold this time... I hope David arrives here soon. She wants him to call her.

JANET

(smiling)

He's her only child, Mr. Kentley.

KENTLEY

He's my only child, too, but I'm willing to let him grow up.

JANET

Why don't I call and tell her he's been detained?

KENTLEY

Don't pamper her, Janet.

JANET

David might even have stopped off to see her.

(to Brandon, who has come up with the drink for Kentley)
May I use the phone?

BRANDON

Of course. It's in my bedroom.

JANET

How cosy.

BRANDON

Aren't you ready for another?

JANET

I will be.

(drinks the remaining drop)

I am.

(gives him her glass)

Thank you.

Brandon turns and CAMERA MOVES WITH HIM, goes to the drink table. He overhears:

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

A very charming young man. I wish David saw more of him.

JANET'S VOICE

Yes.

(Brandon smiles to himself)

I'll go and call.

Brandon has reached the drink table. Kenneth stands there, nursing his drink.

BRANDON

Kenneth, there's too much air in your glass.

KENNETH

No, I'm fine.

BRANDON

(re-filling Janet's glass)

Would you mind taking this to Janet?

KENNETH

Sure... Why?

DOORBELL BUZZES.

BRANDON

No particular reason. It's hers and I thought you might like to take it to her. She's in the bedroom. Telephoning.

KENNETH

And then you'd like David to walk in.

BRANDON

No. That would be too much of a shock.

Kenneth looks at him sharply; then takes the glass and goes, CAMERA MOVING WITH him. Enroute the CAMERA STOPS by Mrs. Atwater seated on a bench beside the piano, talking to Phillip, who is leaning on the piano bending over her, allowing Kenneth to go on out of picture.

Rupert is distinguished in appearance, manner and thought. He is about thirty-six, and walks with a slight limp. His clothes have cost less than any in the room but look better. He has a faintly mocking, cynical air but his charm softens the effect of his rather sharp tongue. Very often, you don't know, consequently, whether he means the extreme ideas he expounds or is joking. He listens to the music a moment, then:

RUPERT:

Your touch has improved, Phillip.

Phillip stops playing with a discordant note.

BRANDON:

(swings around from his position at the window - delighted)

Rupert!

(going to him)

I was beginning to think you weren't going to show.

RUPERT:

You know me better than that.

BRANDON:

Mrs. Atwater, may I present Mr. Cadell?

MRS. ATWATER:

Delighted!

BRANDON:

Mr. Kentley.

RUPERT:

(a slight smile at her)

Thank you. How do you do, Mr. Kentley.

KENTLEY:

Rupert Cadell the housemaster at Somerville?

RUPERT:

I used to be.

KENTLEY:

Then you must have taught my son, David!

RUPERT:

You flatter me.

(turns to Janet)

How do you do.

JANET:

Hello, chum.

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RUPERT:
Oh - Miss Walker.

JANET:
How'd you know?

RUPERT:
Brandon's spoken of you.

JANET:
Did he do me justice?

RUPERT:
Do you deserve justice?... Why little
Kenneth Turner! How you've grown!

KENNETH:
Hello - er -
(he is too bashful to
use the familiar name.)

RUPERT:
Go on, Kenneth. School's out.
You can say it.

KENNETH:
(laughing)
Rupert. You're the same as ever.
It's awfully good to see you again!

RUPERT:
Why?

KENNETH:
(taken aback)
...Well....

RUPERT:
(smiling; nicely)
Don't mind me. I'm very pleased to
see you again. And that.
(points to the champagne
in Kenneth's hand)
It bears a curious resemblance to
champagne.

THE CAMERA CLOSES IN on Brandon and Rupert, as Brandon
leads him to the drink table.

BRANDON:
I is.

RUPERT:
(looks at the label)
And such good champagne! What's the
occasion?

BRANDON:

(stuttering)

I told you over the phone. It began as a little party for Mr. Kentley. So he could see those first editions. Then it turned out Phillip and I were going up to the country tonight -

RUPERT:

You told me that, too, Brandon.

BRANDON:

(stuttering)

Did I?

RUPERT:

Yes?

BRANDON:

Well...I thought I'd make it sort of a farewell for Phillip.

RUPERT:

Therefore: champagne.

BRANDON:

Yes.

RUPERT:

I see.

BRANDON:

It's true.

RUPERT:

You always did stutter when you were excited.

BRANDON:

I'm always excited when I give a party.

RUPERT:

(with a look)

Really?

MRS. WILSON'S VOICE:

Mr. Cadell!

The CAMERA MOVES to show her advancing toward the chest with a tray of food. Rupert goes to her.

RUPERT:

Mrs. Wilson!

THE CAMERA CLOSSES IN on Rupert and Mrs. Wilson.

MRS. WILSON:

(in a whisper, as she puts her tray down)

Got that pate you like.

RUPERT:
(whispering back)
I don't like it any more.

MRS. WILSON:
(loudly disappointed)
Oh no!

RUPERT:
(smiling)
No. Just teasing.

MRS. WILSON:
Oh, you're awful.

RUPERT:
Thank you.

CAMERA PULLS BACK TO include Brandon.

MRS. WILSON:
(to Brandon)
You'd better get along with the
carving. The rest'll be here in
two shakes. Oh Mr. Brandon...
I found it.
(she goes)

BRANDON:
(starting to carve)
You know, I haven't the least notion
what it was she lost.

RUPERT:
Wonderful Mrs. Wilson! I may
marry her.

CAMERA PULLS FARTHER BACK beyond the chest as Janet
comes up.

JANET:
Oh it looks heavenly! I hope
David gets here soon!

RUPERT:
Yes. Where is he?

The chest is in the immediate foreground now.

JANET:
I haven't the faintest idea. But
he's so late, Mr. Kentley's getting
annoyed.

RUPERT:
And you?

JANET:
(slightly flustered by his look)
Me, I'm hungry.

RUPERT:
(indicating the buffet)
Exactly what is this, Brandon?

BRANDON:
A Cassone I got in Italy.

RUPERT:
No. I mean why are we eating off
it?

BRANDON:
Oh, I've turned the dining room
into a library.

RUPERT:
Trust you to find a new use for a chest.
(to Janet)
One would always turn up in the bedtime
stories he told at prep school.
(to Brandon)
"The Mistletoe Bough" was really your
favorite tale, wasn't it?

JANET:
What was that one about?

RUPERT:
Oh, I don't remember exactly how it
started..but it was about a lovely
young girl -

KENTLEY:
(coming up)
She was a bride-to-be and on her
wedding day, she playfully hid
herself in a chest.

RUPERT:
That's right.

KENTLEY:
Unfortunately there was a spring lock.
Fifty years later, they found her skeleton.

JANET:
(looking down at the chest)
I don't think I'll get that playful.

BRANDON:
Would you all please help yourselves?
Mrs. Wilson appears with her tray and the wine.

MRS. ATWATER:
Talking of skeletons, have you seen
that new thing at the Strand?

JANET:

Yes. I adored it!

MRS. ATWATER:

Did you? Good! I didn't care for her much. That new girl. Definitely Scorpio.

JANET:

No, I didn't like her either, but her clothes were fabulous.

MRS. ATWATER:

Simply divine!

JANET:

Absolutely heaven!

RUPERT:

I must see it.

JANET:

Of course, the man I have a passion for is James Mason.

RUPERT:

Is he good?

JANET:

Absolutely terrific.

MRS. ATWATER:

So attractively sinister. Taurus The Bull, you know. Very obstinate.

RUPERT:

Really?

MRS. ATWATER:

I have a confession, though. I think I like Mason as much as Errol Flynn.

JANET:

I'll take Cary Grant myself.

MRS. ATWATER:

Oh so will I! Capricorn The Goat. He leaps! Divine! So much...mmm...

JANET:

Oh yes!

RUPERT:

Oh absolutely!

MRS. ATWATER:

He was thrilling in that thing with Bergman. What was it called now? The Something and The Something. No, that was the other one. This was just plain Something. You know. It was... oh, sort of...you know-

RUPERT:

It's right on the tip of my tongue.

JANET:

Oh mine, too! It was just plain Something, I'm sure. I adored it. And Bergman!

MRS. ATWATER:

Well... She's the Virgo type. Like all these, you know.

JANET:

Oh, I think she's lovely.

RUPERT:

(announcing)

I once went to the movies.

(pause)

I saw Mary Pickford..

MRS. ATWATER:

Oh, I was so mad about her. Didn't you love her?

RUPERT:

Oh, I don't know. Virgo type rather. Like all these, you know.

MRS. ATWATER:

Yes but...what did you see her in?

RUPERT:

I can't quite recall. The Something Something. Or just plain Something. I think. Or something like that.

(pause)

Something very like it, anyway.

JANET:

I don't believe you ever went.

MRS. WILSON:
(sotto to Janet)
If I were you, I'd go easy on
the pate, dear. Calories.

She nudges Rupert. Brandon has moved away from the
chest to round up the others.

BRANDON:
Come on, Kenneth. Don't be
polite...Phillip, would you
mind helping Mrs. Atwater?

PHILLIP:
I'd be glad to.

MRS. ATWATER:
Thank you, dear boy.

The guests have begun to help themselves. Mrs. Wilson
passes champagne around. They settle about the room
and begin eating.

KENTLEY:
(to Brandon)
I must apologize for David.
I can't think what's keeping
him.

BRANDON:
He's only in town for the week-
end, Mr. Kentley, and David is
a very popular young man.

JANET:
(at the same time
- to Phillip)
Here - let me help you.

She is serving the chicken. He is holding a plate.

JANET:
White or dark?

PHILLIP:
A little of both on this -
(indicating one
plate)

JANET
(serving)
What about you?

PHILLIP
I don't eat it.

JANET
How queer! I never heard of
anyone who didn't eat chicken,
did you, Mr. Cadell? Oh, you
probably did. Why don't you eat
it, Phillip?

PHILLIP
(getting uncomfortable)
I just don't.

JANET
There must be a reason. Freud
says there's a reason for every-
thing. Even me.

PHILLIP
There's no reason, Janet.

CAMERA GOES into the room as he moves away. He
brings a plate of food to Mrs. Atwater.

RUPERT
As I remember, Phillip, you have
a very funny reason. Doesn't he,
Brandon?

BRANDON:
....Yes.

JANET
I knew there had to be one! Now
what is it? Tell!

BRANDON:
Oh...it's nothing too much.

RUPERT
I think it's quite fascinating.

JANET
Come on, Brandon. Please!

BRANDON
Well..it happened about three
years ago in Connecticut. Mother
has a farm on her place there,
you know.

Phillip puts down his plate and, crossing to the
drink table, pours himself another glass of champagne.

BRANDON

We were going to have chicken so we walked over to the farm. It was a lovely Sunday morning in late Spring. Across the valley, the church bells were ringing...and in the yard, Phillip was doing likewise to the necks of two or three chickens.

MRS. ATWATER

(has a forkful of chicken ready)

Oh dear...

(gulps - the fork returns to her plate)

BRANDON

It was a task he usually performed very competently. But on this particular morning, his touch was, perhaps, a trifle too delicate...because one of the subjects for our dinner table suddenly rebelled. Like Lazarus, he rose from the -

During this, THE CAMERA HAS MOVED SLOWLY over to Phillip, alone. Suddenly he bursts out:

PHILLIP

(turning to Brandon)

That's a lie!

THE CAMERA WHIPS BACK at Phillip's outburst.

BRANDON

Phillip!....

PHILLIP

There isn't a word of truth in the whole story. I never strangled a chicken in my life!

During the following, THE CAMERA HAS MOVED UP to a Closeup of Rupert at the piano.

BRANDON

(o.s. - getting angry)

Now look here, Phillip. Just because -

PHILLIP

(o.s.)

I never strangled a chicken and you know it!

At this, Janet laughs out loud. Rupert watches Phillip and Brandon intently.

JANET (o.s.)

Forgive me. But it just seemed very funny; you two being so intense about an old dead chicken.

BRANDON

(in control again)

Sorry. We were ridiculous and very rude. I apologize for both of us - and the story.

RUPERT:

(mock disappointment)

Is it all over?

(moves to drink table)

BRANDON

(smiling)

I'm afraid so, Rupert.

RUPERT

What a pity. In another moment, you might have been strangling each other... instead of a chicken.

MRS. ATWATER

Mr. Cadell, really!

RUPERT

(smiling)

Well, a man's honor was at stake. And personally, I think a chicken is as good a reason for murder as a blonde, a mattress full of dollar bills or any of the customary unimaginative reasons.

JINET

Now you don't really approve of murder, Rupert - if I may.

RUPERT

You may - and I do. Think of the problems it can solve: unemployment, poverty, standing in line for theatre tickets...

MRS. ATWATER

I must say I've had a perfectly dreadful time getting tickets for that new musical - what is it? - oh, you know...

RUPERT

The - er Something with What's Her Name. Well, my dear Mrs. Atwater, careful application of the trigger finger and a pair of seats in the first row is yours for the shooting. And have you had any difficulty getting in our velvet-rope restaurants?

MRS. ATWATER

Frightful!

RUPERT

A simple problem. A flick of the knife, madame, and if you'll step this way - no, step over the headwaiter's body - thank you, and here's your table.

JANET

(laughing)

Rupert, you're the end!

KENNETH

There's a hotel clerk I could cheerfully flick a knife at.

RUPERT

Sorry. Knives may not be used on hotel employees. They are in the Death By Slow Torture category along with bird lovers, small children and tap dancers. Landlords, of course, are quite another matter. Seeking an apartment? Call on our Miss Sashweight in the Blunt Instrument Department.

MRS. ATWATER

What a divine idea! If it suits your purpose, mercy -

(suddenly horrified)

But then we should all be murdering each other!

RUPERT

Oh no! After all, murder is, or should be, an art. Not one of the Seven Lively, perhaps, but an art nevertheless. And as such, the privilege of committing it should be reserved for the few who are really superior individuals.

BRANDON

And the victims - inferior beings whose lives are unimportant anyway.

RUPERT

Obviously. Mind you, I don't hold with extremists who believe there should be open season for murder all year round. No, I personally prefer having...oh, Cut-A-Throat Week or Strangulation Day or -

KENTLEY

(getting up with a smile)

It's probably a symptom of approaching senility, but I must confess I really don't appreciate this morbid humor.

RUPERT

The humor was unintentional.

KENTLEY

But you're not serious about those theories.

BRANDON

Of course he is.

KENTLEY

You're both pulling my leg.

BRANDON

No. Why do you think that?

KENTLEY

Well, Brandon, the notion that murder is an art which a few superior beings should be allowed to practice...

RUPERT

In season.

KENTLEY

(smiling)

Now I know you're not serious.

RUPERT

But I am! I'm a very serious fellow.

(pause)

KENTLEY

(looks at him, then:)

Then may I ask which of us is to decide another human being is inferior? And is therefore a suitable victim for murder?

RUPERT

(hesitantly)

Well...

BRANDON

The few who are privileged to commit murder.

KENTLEY

And just who might they be?

BRANDON

(a slight smile)

Oh myself, Phillip, possibly Rupert -

RUPERT

Sorry, Kenneth. You're out.

KENTLEY

I'm serious, gentlemen!

BRANDON

So are we, Mr. Kentley.

(Rupert moves to interrupt
but Brandon goes right on)

The few are those men of such intellectual and cultural superiority that they are above the traditional moral concepts. Good and evil, right and wrong were invented for the ordinary average men, the inferior man - because he needs them.

KENTLEY

I gather you agree with Neitzche and his theory of the Superman.

BRANDON

I do.

KENTLEY

So did Hitler!

BRANDON

Hitler was a paranoic savage. His supermen - all Fascist supermen - were brainless murderers. I'd hang any who are left. But then you see, I'd hang them first for being stupid. I'd hang all incompetents and fools anyway. There are far too many in the world.

KENTLEY

Perhaps you should hang me, Brandon, because I am so stupid I cannot tell whether you are all serious or not. In any case, I would rather not hear any more of your - forgive me - contempt for humanity and for the standards of a world I believe is civilized.

BRANDON

Civilized!

KENTLEY

Yes.

BRANDON

Perhaps what is called civilization is hypocrisy!

KENTLEY

Perhaps.

BRANDON:
I'm sure, Rupert, fortunately -

RUPERT:
Gentlemen, really, I -

BRANDON:
(rushing on thru this)
- has the intelligence and the
imagination to -

KENTLEY:
Please Brandon - I think we've had
just about enough.

A rather long, awkward pause.

RUPERT:
Where are those books you set out
for Mr. Kentley, Phillip? I'd like
to see them myself if I may.

PHILLIP:
Of course, they're in the dining
room. Mr. Kentley, wouldn't you like
to see the books now?

BRANDON:
(to Kentley)
I apologize, sir.
(with a smile)
Again. I'm afraid I let myself
get carried away.

KENTLEY:
That's quite all right, my boy.

There is another slight, awkward pause. Kenneth
lights Janet's cigarette.

PHILLIP:
(to Kentley)
I think it's a good collection.
Of first editions, I mean,...

KENTLEY:
I'd like to see them...
(as he and Phillip start
toward dining room)
May I use the telephone first?
(Phillip looks at him)
I'd like to call my wife. She
may have had some word from David.

PHILLIP'S VOICE:
Of course.
(as they go out)
It's this way.

Rupert has moved to follow them out. During the last of the above, he has passed Brandon, giving him a quick look.

RUPERT:

Brandon.

BRANDON:

Yes?

RUPERT:

You were really pushing your point very hard. Not planning to do away with a few inferiors, by any chance?

PAUSE. Brandon then gives a slight laugh and says:

BRANDON:

I'm a creature of whim. Who knows?

As Rupert continues out, Brandon turns to Mrs. Atwater.

BRANDON:

Wouldn't you like to see the books, Mrs. Atwater?

MRS. ATWATER:

(coming over)

Oh indeed yes! You know, when I was a girl, I used to read quite a bit.

(exits)

BRANDON:

(stepping aside to allow her to pass into the foyer)

Oh, we all do strange things in our childhood...

(he follows her, then turns back)

Why don't you put on some records, Kenneth?

KENNETH:

Hmmh?

BRANDON:

A little atmospheric music goes a long way.

(he smiles and goes)

THE CAMERA CLOSES IN on Janet and Kenneth.

JANET:

(angrily)

He's such a sly little devil, isn't he? Bringing us Back Together Again...

(snaps on phonograph)

With saxophones...

KENNETH

Don't let it get you. He's always
doing something like this.
(the music starts)

JANET

I'm going in the other room.

KENNETH

To see the books?

JANET

No. To let Brandon see me.

KENNETH

Do you care what he thinks?

JANET

I know what he thinks! He thinks
I threw you over because David has
a bigger bank account.

KENNETH

Then why go?

JANET

Because...
(stops a second. Her anger
changes to defiance)
Because I'm embarrassed at being
here with you.

KENNETH

(smiling)

Oh, Janet!

JANET

Never thought I could be, did you?

KENNETH

Honestly, no.

JANET

Well, I am and I don't like it one bit.
(starts to door, then turns)
I should think you'd have the decency
to be embarrassed yourself.

KENNETH

Why?

JANET

You threw me over, chum, remember?
My, wouldn't friend Brandon love
to know that!

(Kenneth looks at her)

What's the matter?

KENNETH:
Nothing. I was just thinking.

JANET:
About what?

KENNETH:
Female vanity.

JANET:
Well...I'm also embarrassed
because...

She starts to collect the plates and then moves
across to put them on the chest, THE CAMERA GOING
with her.

KENNETH:
Go on.

JANET:
Well...you and David used to be such
good friends and you're not now and
it's my fault. I'm such an Idiot Girl.

KENNETH:
No, you're not.
He helps her with the plates.

JANET:
Then I'm giving a good imitation of
one.
(in exasperation)
Why must I try and be so smart with
everyone but David?

KENNETH:
(surprised)
Don't you kid with David?

JANET:
(hesitates, then quietly:)
I relax with David...thanks to you.

KENNETH:
To me?!

JANET:
Yes. That grim Sunday at Harvard,
when...you called it quits...David
took me for a walk. My chin was about
an inch from the ground but I couldn't
be the Gay Girl. I just relaxed and
let everything pour out. The Real Real
Me stuff.

(moves impatiently)
Did you hear that little phrase? I
hear myself saying things like that and
I could...oh, where's David?

A slight pause. Kenneth looks at her.

KENNETH

You know, I'm anything but perceptive.

JANET

Why?

KENNETH

Just take my word for it.

(laughs)

Brandon and his atmospheric music.

Another pause. They are looking directly at each other.

KENNETH

You're in love with David, aren't you?

JANET

Yes.

KENNETH

I don't get it.

JANET

Get what?

KENNETH

Brandon made a crack when I got here... well, he sort of implied that I'd have a better chance with you again because David would be out of the running. He -

JANET

Wait! Do you mean before I got here, Brandon knew we had broken -

KENNETH

He even knew about you and David.

JANET

What?!! Kenneth, he pretended to be completely ignorant about it when I told him.

KENNETH

What's going on here anyway?

JANET

(striding to the door)

I don't know but I'm going to find out once and for all!

THE CAMERA SHOOTS OVER Kenneth's shoulder as she crosses the room. She opens the door to the foyer. Janet calls out:

JANET

Brandon,...

BRANDON'S VOICE:

Yes?

JANET:

May I see you for a moment?

BRANDON'S VOICE:

Certainly. .

JANET:

(to Kenneth)

Why can't he keep his hands off people?

(to Brandon, who appears
in the door)

Exactly what are you up to, chum?

BRANDON:

Well, I'm up to getting you a coffee
if you like.

JANET:

Let's dispense with the charm.

As they talk, the CAMERA PICKS UP Rupert who
stands unobserved in the shadows in the foyer.

JANET:

I'd like to know why you had the gall
to tell Kenneth he wouldn't have to
worry very much longer about David and
me.

BRANDON:

I don't think that's precisely what I
said, Kenneth.

JANET:

It's what you implied and I want to
know why!

BRANDON:

Some women are quite charming when
they're angry, Janet. Unfortunately,
you're not.

KENNETH:

(angrily)

Cut that out, Brandon, or I'll -

BRANDON:

Well! Chivalry rears its ugly head!

JANET:

I don't believe David's coming!

BRANDON:

(shrugs)

Wait and see.

JANET:

I don't have to. He's never this late, He's never late at all. And if something came up, he'd have phoned. I think you deliberately arranged it so he wouldn't come!

BRANDON:

How clever of me.

JANET:

(raging on)

I should've known you couldn't just give a party for Mr. Kentley. No, you'd have to add something that appealed to your warped sense of humor. Well, I hope you've enjoyed yourself, Brandon. I haven't.

(very near tears, she runs out of the room, Kenneth, with a look at Brandon, goes after her)

Rupert, who is holding a dish of dessert in each hand, watches her run by and steps into the room.

RUPERT:

Something gone wrong, Brandon?

BRANDON:

No...Janet just has a talent for being bothersome at times. However....

(going to door)

I suppose I'd better try to pacify her.

(almost out, he turns back)

What'd you mean: something gone wrong?

RUPERT:

You plan your parties so well that it's odd for anything to go wrong.....

(casually)

She seems to be missing David,

BRANDON:

Aren't we all?

(he goes out)

THE CAMERA MOVES IN ON Rupert who is looking after Brandon with a curious expression. This is broken by:

MRS. WILSON'S VOICE:

Two desserts, Mr. Cadell?

THE CAMERA MOVES IN to the two. Mrs. Wilson has come in with her tray to clear up. She does so during:

RUPERT

One for you and one for me, my love.

MRS. WILSON

Oh, Mr. C.!

RUPERT

Well, the others don't seem to be in the mood for ice cream.

MRS. WILSON

No. Though they could all do with a little cooling off...My it's a peculiar party. Not that that surprises me.

Rupert has put down one of the desserts. He now turns on a lamp and eats the other.

RUPERT

Why not?

MRS. WILSON

I could've predicted it this morning. Both of them must've got up out of the wrong side of the bed. They've been in a state all day.

RUPERT

Mr. Brandon said he's always in a state when he gives a party.

MRS. WILSON

This is the first time I've seen it. Usually he lets me prepare everything in my own way but -

(indicating a plate she has picked up)

Look at this. The chicken's hardly been touched.

RUPERT

(prodding her casually)

What was so different today?

MRS. WILSON

What wasn't? Mr. Brandon was in the maddest rush for me to clean up and get the table set - oh, it looked so lovely! And then, when I was whisking out to do the shopping, he suddenly told me to take the whole afternoon for it!

(Rupert gives her a look)

The whole afternoon - after that mad rush in the morning!

RUPERT

Did he say why?

MRS. WILSON

No. Just a whim, I suppose. But when I came back, he and Mr. Phillip were going at it hammer and tongs.

RUPERT

Oh? What about?

MRS. WILSON

(reprovingly)

Mr. Cadell, even if I did know, do you think I'd tell?

RUPERT

(cheerfully)

I hope so.

MRS. WILSON

Not me. I'm like the grave.

As a matter of fact, she is at the grave now - clearing plates from the chest on to her tray. THE CAMERA IS SLOWLY MOVING around them.

MRS. WILSON

Look at this mess! It just makes double the work. After I have this cleaned off, I'm just going to have to clear all those books off the dining room table, bring them in here, and put them back in the chest - which is where they were in the first place!

RUPERT

Why did you serve from here anyway?

As they talk, the CAMERA SLOWLY BEGINS TO PULL BACK FURTHER AND FURTHER. The chest and the two figures remain in focus, but the voices get fainter and fainter. We can see Mrs. Wilson gesturing every now and then toward the chest. The room is quite shadowy. THE CAMERA KEEPS BACKING UP until it reaches the doorway, and there, in the immediate foreground, half-profile to us, is Phillip.

As the CAMERA RETREATS, we hear:

MRS. WILSON

It wasn't my idea. I had everything laid out in the dining room. And it was just beautiful. Of course, on this thing, there isn't half the room. We couldn't even think of putting the flowers on it, though rather than these candlesticks, I would have - personally, mind you...

It is at this point that the CAMERA REACHES THE DOORWAY and we see Phillip. The voices are only an indistinct murmur now. Phillip tries desperately to hear. Finally, he strolls casually into the room, fighting to keep control of himself. As he walks over to Rupert and Mrs. Wilson, their voices come up again:

RUPERT

....think you managed quite well.

MRS. WILSON

Managed, yes! But you saw how bunched up all the plates and silverware and -

PHILLIP

(to Rupert)

Is she still harping on her table and how awkward it was to serve from this? It's really much more convenient, you know, because this way, people don't have to go all the way into the dining room to get their food and then come all the way back here to eat it.

MRS. WILSON

(tartly)

It seems to me they've gone all the way in there now to have their dessert and coffee.

PHILLIP

(rudely, as Rupert smiles)

Mrs. Wilson, please serve the guests, don't lecture them.

Angrily, he turns and walks to the piano CAMERA WITH HIM. Mrs. Wilson shoots him a look, picks up her tray - which is loaded with plates - and says, sotto voce to Rupert:

MRS. WILSON

We did get up out of the wrong side of the bed, didn't we?

She goes out. Rupert stands alone for a moment by the chest. He looks down at it, thinking. Suddenly, the piano intrudes on his thoughts. Phillip is playing the same gay, jiggling tune he did when Rupert came in. This puzzles Rupert. He looks at the chest again, then turns and, CAMERA WITH HIM, goes over to the piano.

RUPERT

I'm in quite an embarrassing position.

PHILLIP

How do you mean?

RUPERT

I seem to be the only one who's having a good time.

PHILLIP

You and Mrs. Atwater.

He is trying hard for control. Rupert looks at him, then at the little lamp on the piano. Deliberately, he switches it on. The light shoots across Phillip's face.

RUPERT

What's going on, Phillip?

PHILLIP

Would you mind turning that off?

RUPERT

Oh, sorry.
(switches it off)

PHILLIP

I don't like to play with a light in my eyes.

RUPERT

You know, Phillip, I get quite intrigued when people don't answer questions. And quite curious.

Far off, from the streets below, comes the sound of a police siren. It comes nearer and nearer during:

PHILLIP

Did you ask me a question?

RUPERT

Yes, Phillip. I asked you a question.

A pause. Phillip hears the siren now and plays louder.

PHILLIP

Well? What was it?

RUPERT

I asked you what is going on here?

PHILLIP

A party.

RUPERT

But a rather peculiar party.
(he hears the siren)
What's it all about, Phillip?

PHILLIP:

What's what all about? Stop playing
"Crime and Punishment", Rupert. If you
want to know something, come out with
it! Otherwise -

The siren has reached its peak. It is right under
the window. Phillip stops playing with a bang.

RUPERT:

(lightly)
Temper, temper.
(Phillip moves to get up)
Don't stop.

PHILLIP:

I'd like a drink.

The CAMERA PANS OVER TO the drink table with Rupert.

RUPERT:

Go on playing. I'll get one for you.
Scotch?

The siren is fading away again; Phillip is calmer.

PHILLIP:

No, brandy.

RUPERT:

(as Phillip plays again)
Fond of that little tune, aren't you?
(pouring the brandy)
I wish I could come straight out with
what I want to know, Phillip. Unfortun-
ately, I don't know anything. I merely
suspect.
(bringing the drink over)
I said -

PHILLIP:

I heard you.

The CAMERA PANS BACK WITH Rupert to the piano.

RUPERT:

This all right?

PHILLIP:

Thank you.
(stops playing with his right
hand to take a drink)
It's fine.
(plays again)

There is a carved metronome on the piano. Rupert
picks it up.

1/13/48.
61a.

RUPERT:

Do you use this?

PHILLIP:

Sometimes.

RUPERT:

I thought only beginners did. I
will say it's quite a -

PHILLIP:

All right, Rupert. I'll ask you:
What do you suspect?

RUPERT:

Oh, I've forgotten. But...
where's David, Phillip?

PHILLIP:

I don't know. Why?

RUPERT:

Brandon knows.

PHILLIP:

Does he?

RUPERT:

Doesn't he?

PHILLIP:

Not that I know of.

RUPERT:

Oh come now.

PHILLIP:

I don't. Why don't you ask Brandon?

RUPERT:

I have, but he's too busy maneuvering
the other two points of the triangle.
What for, Phillip? Just what is Brandon
trying to do with Janet and Kenneth?
(Phillip laughs happily)
What are you laughing at?

PHILLIP:

Nothing.

RUPERT:

Oh. Am I so far off the track?

PHILLIP:

There's nothing going on at all,
Rupert.

RUPERT:

You're more than usually allergic
to the truth tonight, Phillip. This
is the second time you haven't told it.

PHILLIP:

Thanks. When was the first?

RUPERT:

When you said you had never
strangled a chicken.

PHILLIP:

You're confused. Brandon dreamt that
up...for the sake of a very unfunny
joke.

RUPERT:

No, he didn't, Phillip. And if you'll think back very carefully, you'll realize I know he didn't.

(idly, he sets the metronome ticking - at a tempo faster than Phillip's)

About a year ago, I was up at the farm, remember? And one morning I saw you display your handiwork. You were quite a good strangler, as I recall.

PHILLIP:

Well, I - I just meant Brandon's story wasn't true. I didn't mean I hadn't killed any chickens.

RUPERT:

But that's what you said.

PHILLIP:

Well, I didn't think it was a suitable topic of conversation while we were eating.

RUPERT:

(speeding up the metronome)
You could have said that.

PHILLIP:

(playing faster)
All right, I didn't!

RUPERT:

But we're not eating now, Phillip. Why did you lie to me?

PHILLIP:

Because I don't like to talk about -
(cuts himself off)

RUPERT:

About what? About strangling chic -

PHILLIP:

(suddenly stops playing)
I can't play with that thing!

At that moment, lights in the room are suddenly switched on from the doorway. He whirls and what he sees coming into the room, makes him freeze with a frightened look on his face. Rupert looks at him and turns. Mr. Kentley, followed by Brandon, is coming into the room. Kentley is carrying a small pile of books tied together with the piece of rope.

As THE CAMERA PULLS BACK QUICKLY to a close-up of the parcel, we hear the rapid ticking of the metronome and:

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

It's extremely generous of you, Brandon. I don't quite know -

BRANDON:

Please. You appreciate first editions far more than I, Mr. Kentley.

Over the last, the CAMERA HAS MOVED IN AGAIN to catch Rupert and Phillip. The latter is staring at the rope. Rupert looks at the parcel and back at Phillip.

RUPERT:

What's wrong.

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

It's very nice of you, Brandon. You and Phillip must come to dinner very soon. I'll get David to fix the day.

During this, Phillip has grabbed the metronome and stopped it. THE CAMERA is now back on Rupert and Phillip.

RUPERT:

What's wrong now, Phillip? Don't you want Mr. Kentley to have the books?

PHILLIP:

(unnerved)

No. I mean I don't care if he has them. I just -

RUPERT:

What?

PHILLIP:

I just think it's a clumsy way of tying them up, that's all.

Rupert stares at him, then back at the books. Over this, we hear:

MRS. ATWATER'S VOICE:

You called Alice a little while ago, didn't you, Henry?

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

Yes.

JANET'S VOICE:

And no word from David.

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

No.

KENNETH'S VOICE:

I don't think you really ought to worry.
David's never had any trouble in taking
care of himself.

During this, THE CAMERA HAS PULLED BACK TO SHOW
Phillip getting up from the piano and going quickly to the
drink table. Brandon has seen this and casually excuses
himself and goes over to Phillip. As THE CAMERA MOVES IN
ON them, we see that Rupert has not missed this and is
slowly strolling toward them. The conversation between
Phillip and Brandon is in muted, tight tones.

BRANDON:

Take it easy, Phillip.

PHILLIP:

Rupert's on to something.

BRANDON:

He isn't. Now let up.

In the background, the voices of the others can be
heard distinctly.

PHILLIP:

I've got to have a drink, Brandon,
(starting to pour brandy)

BRANDON:

(holding his arm)
You've had enough. You are not going
to -

PHILLIP:

(evenly; cold anger)
Take your hand off my arm.
(a second, then Brandon does)
Don't ever again tell me what to do
and what not to do. I don't like it,
Brandon, and I'm not going to -

Rupert appears at the edge of scene.

BRANDON:

Keep your voice down and have your
rotten drink.

The SCENE WIDENS as Rupert walks over.

RUPERT:
I hope I haven't upset Phillip.

BRANDON:
More likely mixing his drinks.

RUPERT:
(to Brandon)
You seem rather upset yourself.

BRANDON:
Do I?

RUPERT:
(firmly)
Yes. There's something that's upsetting the two of you a great deal. Something that -

He is interrupted by:

MRS. WILSON'S VOICE:
Excuse me, sir.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK so that we see Mrs. Wilson. She is standing near the others, with her tray.

BRANDON:
Yes?

MRS. WILSON:
There's a lady phoning for either Mr. Kentley or Mrs. Atwater.

MRS. ATWATER:
It must be Alice. I'll talk to her, Henry.

KENTLEY:
All right.

MRS. WILSON:
Down the hall to your left, dear. In the first bedroom.

MRS. ATWATER:
Thank you.

She goes out. Mrs. Wilson comes down to the chest with her tray and starts to clear. The top of the chest is now in the IMMEDIATE FOREGROUND. Over it, we can see the dining room and the swinging door to the kitchen. At the EXTREME RIGHT OF SCREEN is Rupert, his back to CAMERA.

During the following conversation, Mrs. Wilson clears everything off the chest (except the cloth and candlesticks) on to her tray which she then carries into the kitchen.

JANET'S VOICE:

Mr. Kentley, do you suppose David
could possibly be home?

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

(worried)

I don't know, Janet. I hope so.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

I hate to throw a damper, but if David
were home, I should think he'd be
calling...rather than Mrs. Kentley.
Wouldn't you say so, Brandon?

BRANDON'S VOICE:

I wouldn't know.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

The David I remember was very polite
... as well as very punctual.

JANET'S VOICE:

He hasn't changed.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Of course, if he isn't home, where
could he be?

PHILLIP'S VOICE:

(very nervously)

Don't ask me. I...don't know.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

He might be any number of places.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Such as?

Mrs. Wilson is now seen coming out of the kitchen.
During the following, she picks up some books from the
dining room table, brings them into the living room and
puts them down on the floor by the chest RIGHT IN FRONT
OF CAMERA.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

The Harvard Club or the Bradley's
are having a party or - well, he
might even have gone down to Janet's.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Why?

BRANDON'S VOICE:

Perhaps he decided to pick her up
after all.

JANET'S VOICE:

I phoned my place after I spoke to Mrs. Kentley.

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

He hadn't been there.

JANET'S VOICE:

No. I left a message just in case but...

RUPERT'S VOICE:

We might have a better chance of finding where he is now if we knew where he was this afternoon. What do you think, Brandon?

BRANDON'S VOICE:

I haven't the least idea where he was this afternoon.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

But don't you think it would help if we found out where he was.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

I.....suppose so.

Now Mrs. Wilson takes the tablecloth off the chest, picks up the candlesticks and carries them into the kitchen. The top of the chest is now bare and empty - directly in front of us.

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

I know David was going to the Club to play tennis this afternoon and I know he got there.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Why?

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

Because someone phoned from there with a message that David would meet us here.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Do you know who gave the message?

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

No.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Then obviously, David must've run into someone at the club who changed his plans. You weren't there today by any chance, Kenneth?

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KENNETH'S VOICE:

No. I wish I had been.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

I don't suppose you or Brandon were,
Phillip.

PHILLIP'S VOICE:

No. . .

BRANDON'S VOICE:

Hardly. We had our hands full.
Getting ready for the party.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Oh, was there a lot to be done this
afternoon?

BRANDON'S VOICE:

You know....

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Yes.

Mrs. Wilson now comes out of the kitchen, picks up
some more books from the dining room table and comes back
into the living room to the chest. During this:

RUPERT'S VOICE:

You didn't speak to David at all today?

BRANDON'S VOICE:

No. Why do you ask?

RUPERT'S VOICE:

I thought he might've phoned. To say
he'd be late or something.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

He didn't. Neither Phillip nor I have
spoken to David since the day we invited
him to the party.

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

That's odd.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

What do you mean?

KENTLEY'S VOICE:

Oh, I thought I heard David on the
phone with Phillip yesterday morning.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Really?

PHILLIP'S VOICE:

Oh. Yes. You did. I'd - forgotten.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

What were you talking to him about, Phillip? Did he call about the party?

PHILLIP'S VOICE:

Yes. He...he wanted to make sure of the time...That was all.

Mrs. Wilson is DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF CAMERA at the chest. Holding the books she has just brought in one hand, she leans down and tries to lift the lid of the chest with the other. Rupert, who has casually been moving back and forth during the scene, turns at this point and sees Mrs. Wilson's difficulty.

RUPERT:

Let me give you a hand, Mrs. Wilson.

MRS. WILSON:

Oh, thank you, Mr. Cadell.

Rupert now bends down and starts to lift the lid of the chest with both hands. Just at that moment, however, Brandon steps into scene and with a seemingly casual but firm hand presses the lid, which Rupert has raised an inch or two, back down again. As he does so:

BRANDON:

That's all right, Mrs. Wilson. You needn't bother to put the books back. Just leave them on the top here.

MRS. WILSON:

(putting the books on top)

All right.

As Brandon goes out of scene, she picks up the books she has earlier placed on the floor and puts them on top of the chest, too. Then she goes back to the dining room to get the rest of the books.

During all this, Rupert has remained exactly where he was: right by the chest. At Brandon's gesture, he looked sharply at him, then back at the chest. Now he stands, looking off screen, thinking. Slowly, his eyes come back to the chest and the realization of what may be in it hits him.

In the doorway to the foyer, however, Mrs. Atwater now appears. The telephone conversation she has just had has changed her to a serious, deeply worried woman.

MRS. ATWATER: O.S.

Henry...Alice hasn't had a word from David and she's frantic.

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As she comes into the room, THE CAMERA PULLS
BACK to show her joining the others.

KENTLEY
I'd better talk to her.

MRS. ATWATER
She hung up. She began to cry so
badly, she...Henry, I'm worried.

KENTLEY
What did she say?

MRS. ATWATER
She's been calling every place he
might be. Not once but several
times. And now...Henry, she thinks
he might have had an accident and
wants you to call the police.

JANET:
The police?!

Phillip's reaction to the word is caught by THE
CAMERA and Rupert.

KENTLEY
(upset)
I doubt if that will be necessary.
Anita. David's not a child. I'm
sure he's all right. I....
(suddenly, he stops and seems
to collapse; a pause, then:)
Brandon, I think I'd better go home.
My wife needs me and...this isn't like
David, He...

BRANDON
Of course. I understand.

JANET
May I go with you, Mr. Kentley?

KENTLEY
Thank you, Janet. I'd like you to.
(starting out with Mrs. Atwater)

BRANDON
I'll get your things. Oh - Mr. Kentley,
Your books..

KENTLEY
(taking them)
Oh. Oh yes.. Thank you.

BRANDON
(going to the foyer with
Kentley and Mrs. Atwater)
I can't tell you how sorry I am.
Would you call me as soon as you
hear from David?

The CAMERA GOES with them out of the room into the hallway.

KENTLEY

I'll be glad to.

MRS. ATWATER

(as they go out)

I'm sure the dear boy will turn up somehow, Henry.

KENNETH

(to Janet - who is about to follow)

Janet.....

JANET

Yes?

KENNETH

This is hardly the time but...I'm awfully glad we talked before.

JANET

So am I. And David will be, too.

KENNETH

That makes me feel good. Well....
(holds out hand)

JANET

Kenneth...why don't you come with us?

KENNETH

Oh, I -

JANET

Please.
(a slight pause)

KENNETH

Thanks.

Brandon comes back from the foyer holding a coat.

BRANDON

This yours, Janet?

JANET

(coldly)

Yes. I'll just carry it.

(she starts out - then stops in the doorway and turns to Brandon)

Oh - thanks.

(she goes)

KENNETH

I'll get my hat.

BRANDON

Oh? Going with Janet?

KENNETH

(embarrassed)

Well...yes. We're all going.

BRANDON

(a smile)

What did I predict?

Kenneth looks at him, then turns sharply and goes into the foyer. Brandon follows him. THE CAMERA, however, PANS BACK into the room. Phillip walks to DRINK TABLE watching Rupert, who is still standing by the chest. There is a strange look on Rupert's face. He is completely lost in thought. Almost unconscious of his movements, he turns and slowly walks out of the room into the foyer. Over this, we hear:

BRANDON'S VOICE

Good night, Mr. Kentley. I hope Mrs. Kentley is better very soon.

KENTLEY'S VOICE

Thank you.

BRANDON'S VOICE

You will call the moment you hear from David?

KENTLEY'S VOICE

Yes. Say good night to Phillip for us, will you?

There is the sound of the hall door opening. The voices get further off.

BRANDON'S VOICE

Certainly. Mrs. Atwater, thank you so much for coming.

MRS. ATWATER

Thank you for letting me come. I'm sorry we have to leave. Good night.

Rupert is now in the foyer. Through the open door, we can see Brandon bidding his guests goodnight outside in the hall. Mrs. Wilson is near the open closet and when she sees Rupert, she says:

MRS. WILSON

I'll get your hat, Mr. Cadell.

She reaches into the closet. Over this, from the hall:

BRANDON

Good night.

KENTLEY

Thank you again for the books.
(we see him carrying the parcel)

Mrs. Wilson takes a hat from the closet and hands it to Rupert. It is the same type hat Kenneth, in the hall outside, is wearing.

RUPERT

(absently)

Thank you.

Still lost in thought, he puts the hat on. It is too small for him, so small it looks comical and Mrs. Wilson bursts into laughter.

MRS. WILSON

Oh, that's not yours!

But as she says this, Rupert is taking off the hat and the CAMERA IS RUSHING INTO A CLOSEUP of Rupert and the hat. He looks at the inside of the hat absently and then what he sees produces a strong reaction. (Note: The hat might be tilted so that the audience, too, sees the initials: D.K.) Rupert shuts his eyes with a sick feeling of horror: this is confirmation of his suspicions. The CAMERA PULLS BACK as -

MRS. WILSON

Here we are.

She hands him his own hat and takes back the one she has given him - David's. Over all this, we hear the group in the hall saying "Good night." As Rupert starts to leave, Brandon comes back into the foyer.

BRANDON

Oh, you going, too?

RUPERT

Yes, I must. Good night.

BRANDON

Good night.

He holds the door open as Rupert walks out.

Mrs. Wilson goes out into the dining room. Brandon closes the door but just before he does, we hear Rupert's voice from the hall.

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RUPERT'S VOICE:

Let me carry the books for you,
Mr. Kentley.

For a moment after he has closed the door, Brandon leans against it, a pleased smile on his face. Then, lighting a cigarette, he goes into the living room. The CAMERA GOES in the room with him, ON HIS BACK.

Phillip is standing at the large window with a drink, facing the chest,

BRANDON:

(gaily mocking)

"Thank you for a lovely evening."

"Good night." "Good night."

(bows mockingly)

"It's been charming."

(laughs)

Phillips, this party really deserves to go down in history.

(Phillip moves impatiently)

Oh come on! It's all over and it couldn't have gone more beautifully!

PHILLIP:

Yes it could. Without Rupert.

BRANDON:

But he was brilliant! He helped me say all the things I wanted to say to those idiots. He gave the party the very touch I predicted.

PHILLIP:

(very tight now - and angry)

The touch of what? Prying? Snooping? Or just plain pumping? Do you know how busy he was questioning me?

BRANDON:

About what?

PHILLIP:

(evasively)

What difference? You were busy in there arranging that other little "touch" of yours.

BRANDON:

What touch?

PHILLIP:

Tying up the books that way.

BRANDON:

Oh, I thought it was wonderful. Didn't you like it?

PHILLIP

No, Brandon. I didn't like it one bit. You'll ruin everything with your neat little touches!

BRANDON

Keep quiet! Mrs. Wilson's still here.

Phillip shrugs and goes to the drink table.

BRANDON

Determined to get drunk, aren't you?

PHILLIP

(sweetly)

I am drunk.

BRANDON

And as childish as you were before when you called me a liar.

PHILLIP

You had no business telling that story.

BRANDON

Why did you lie anyway?

PHILLIP

(furiously)

I had to! Have you ever bothered for just one minute to understand how someone else might feel?

BRANDON

I'm not sentimental, if that's what you mean.

PHILLIP

No, that's not what I mean but it doesn't matter! Nothing matters except that Mr. Brandon liked the party. Mr. Brandon gave the party. Mr. Brandon had a delightful evening. Well, I had a rotten evening.

(he drinks)

BRANDON

Keep drinking and you'll have a worse morning.

PHILLIP

At least if I have a hangover, it'll be all mine!!

Brandon hears what is behind this. He looks at Phillip who is really trying to control himself. Outside the large window, neon signs begin to blink.

BRANDON

(quietly - nicely)

You know, Phillip, I've been thinking. We deserve a real holiday after it's all over.

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BRANDON: (Cont.)

Where would you like to go? Of course,
I think we really should come back here
for a few days first. Otherwise, it
might look a little.....

PHILLIP:

(cutting quietly)

I've been praying I'd wake up and find
we hadn't done it yet.

BRANDON:

But why?

PHILLIP:

(a little boy now)

I'm scared to death, Brandon. I think
we're going to get caught.

BRANDON:

(laughs)

There's not a chance. Oh, there was,
I suppose, but not anymore. Why,
we're prac -

(there is a sound from
the hall. He stops)

Is that you, Mrs. Wilson?

He moves away towards the doorway, CAMERA GOING WITH
him. Mrs. Wilson is standing there.

MRS. WILSON:

Yes. I'll need a key to get in to
clean up in the morning...that is, if
you're still driving up to the farm
tonight.

BRANDON:

Oh, we're driving up all right.

He takes out his key and gives it to her.

MRS. WILSON:

That's good. You don't look too well,
either of you. Thanks.

(for the key)

Of course, I could do with a rest myself,
but I want both of you to come back brown
as berries.

BRANDON:

We will.

MRS. WILSON:

Well, I'm off. Enjoy yourselves.
Don't forget to write and...mind your
Ps and Qs.

As she goes out Brandon follows her. THE CAMERA GOES with him. He crosses to the hall telephone. As he dials we see Mrs. Wilson go out through the front door.

PHILLIP'S VOICE

(sharply)

Who're you calling?

BRANDON

Only the garage...Hello? This is Mr. Brandon. Would you send my car around, please?...Yes, right away...Thank you.

He hangs up and returns to the room, CAMERA LEADING. He goes to the chest, takes the books off and puts them on the floor. Phillip watches him, frightened. When the chest is cleared, Brandon straightens up, takes a breath, then starts to open the lid. He stops.

BRANDON

We'd better draw the curtains.

Phillip goes to the big window, Brandon to the side windows. But before either can reach the curtains, the doorbell buzzes. They stop dead.

PHILLIP

(a petrified whisper)

Who's that?.... Brandon, who's -

BRANDON

Probably the garage man with my car keys.

Despite his words, he goes quickly to the pile of books and begins to put them back on the top of the chest. As he does this, he says:

BRANDON

Answer it.

PHILLIP

There hasn't been time for him to get here.

BRANDON

Then maybe Mrs. Wilson's forgotten something. Answer it!

PHILLIP

Brandon...couldn't we pretend we're not home?

BRANDON

With all these lights on? Answer it,
Phillip!

The doorbell buzzes again as Phillip goes into the hall. Brandon quickly puts more books back on top of the chest as:

PHILLIP'S VOICE:

Who is it?....Oh...

He comes rushing back into the room. He has gone to pieces now.

PHILLIP

Brandon...Brandon, it's Rupert.

BRANDON:

What?

PHILLIP

He wants to come up. He says he left his cigarette case here and he wants to come up!

BRANDON

Well, let him come.

PHILLIP

But you know he's lying! He's caught on! He didn't leave any -

BRANDON

Shut up and get back to the phone.

PHILLIP

I won't.

BRANDON

Get back to that phone!

PHILLIP

Brandon, I can't.

BRANDON:

You've got to!

PHILLIP

No. He knows and I'm not going to -

Brandon slams him across the face.

BRANDON

Now you shut up!

He walks swiftly to the foyer. The CAMERA FOLLOWS as far as the doorway. From there, we see Brandon pick up the dangling house phone.

BRANDON:

Rupert? Come on up...oh, of course not. He's just a little tight...No, we'll find it in no time...Right.

He hangs up and walks swiftly back to the living room. Phillip is sitting on one of the chairs in front of the piano, just barely rocking back and forth in silent anguish. Brandon goes to him.

BRANDON:

(harshly)

Phillip...Phillip, listen to me. Rupert is on his way up now and you have got to pull yourself together!...Phillip, did you hear me?

Phillip sits dazed as though he has not heard. Brandon helps him and takes him to the drink table, saying:

BRANDON:

Come on. Take another drink if you must. But get hold of yourself and keep your mouth shut. It'll be over in five minutes. I don't know how much, if anything, Rupert knows. But I promise you he'll be out of here in five minutes...one way or the other.

(Phillip stares at him)

Phillip, for those five minutes, you must pull yourself together, do you -

PHILLIP:

(shaking his head)

Brandon...

BRANDON:

(grabs his arm)

Now look! I am not going to be caught because of you -

(doorbell rings)

- or anybody else! No one is going to get in my way now!

In effect, Brandon, from here on, is a madman. He goes quickly out of the room into the foyer, CAMERA FOLLOWING. There, he turns left toward the bedrooms. THE CAMERA, however, STAYS ON the door to the hall. The doorbell rings again and we hear Brandon opening the bedroom door. A slight pause, then we hear Brandon's footsteps returning; the doorbell rings again; the footsteps and Brandon's

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breathing. And then - a gun appears in the IMMEDIATE FOREGROUND. As Brandon's hands crack open the gun to check the bullets, the doorbell rings again. Brandon begins to come into scene as he advances toward the door, putting the gun in his pocket. THE CAMERA PANS FROM the gun to the living room doorway. Phillip stands there staring down at the gun. We hear the door open, and over the following dialogue, the CAMERA PULLS BACK.

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Sorry to bother you, Brandon.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

It's no bother at all. Come in.

Rupert enters, followed by Brandon, and casually drops his hat.

RUPERT:

I knew you were leaving tonight
and I didn't want to be left
without my case. Hello, Phillip.

PHILLIP:

Hello.

RUPERT:

I didn't mean to alarm you before.

BRANDON:

You didn't alarm him. He's just
slightly anti-social tonight.

RUPERT:

Oh. I thought perhaps -

BRANDON:

(cutting him off)

Any idea where you left the case?
(watches Rupert
carefully)

RUPERT:

(cheerfully)

No. None at all... Completely un-
like me to forget it, isn't it? I
suppose a psychoanalyst would say
I didn't really forget it. I un-
consciously left it because I wanted
to come back... But why should I want
to come back?

PHILLIP:

Yes. Why?

BRANDON:

For the pleasure of our company.
Or another drink.

RUPERT:

That's an idea. May I have one
for the road?

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BRANDON:
(moving to drink
table)
Of course. A short one?

RUPERT:
No. I'd prefer a long one...if
you don't mind.

BRANDON:
Not at all. Phillip, will you
fix Rupert a drink?

Phillip hesitates, then turns to fix the highball.
Rupert is now walking casually to the chest.

RUPERT:
Now let's see...The last I re-
member having the case was when
I was - here.

(he is at the chest;
Brandon watches sharply)
I was about to open the chest
for Mrs. Wilson...

(picks up two or three
books; Brandon takes a
step to him)
...when you came over, Brandon.

During this, unseen by Brandon or Phillip, he has slipped
his cigarette case from his pocket on to the chest. Now
he turns away, puzzled.

RUPERT:
But then what? I think I -

He turns back to the chest and, surprise, sees the case.

RUPERT:
Why look!
(picks it up)
Here it is. Right where I left
it! Gentlemen, I beg your par-
don. Most humbly...May I still
have that drink anyway?

BRANDON:
Of course,

RUPERT:
You really don't mind?

BRANDON:
Why should we?

RUPERT:
Oh, you might be...
(smiles without
finishing)

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BRANDON:

What?

RUPERT:

Tired. You're sure it's all right?

PHILLIP:

(bursting)

He said you could have it!

RUPERT:

...Thank you.

BRANDON:

(going to drink
table)

Don't mind Phillip. I'm afraid he's
had a few too many.

(takes the highball
and brings it to
Rupert)

RUPERT:

Why not? After all, it was a party.
(sits - in the chair
David sat in)

It's very pleasant to sit here with
a good drink and good company.

BRANDON:

I'm glad.

RUPERT:

Don't let me be in the way.

BRANDON:

Of what?

RUPERT:

I know you have things to do..
(a slight pause)

BRANDON:

What do you mean?

RUPERT:

Packing last minute odds and ends..
You are driving up to Connecticut
tonight, aren't you?

BRANDON:

Yes. But we're all packed..

RUPERT:

All ready...except for one guest
who must be gotten rid of..

(sets down his glass)

Well, I'll be off...

(takes out cigarette
case)

...as soon as I finish my drink.

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BRANDON:
(going over with his
lighter)
There's no need to hurry, Rupert.

As he lights Rupert's cigarette, the bulging gun in his pocket is directly toward the CAMERA.

RUPERT:
Thanks. I would like to stay a
bit. Perhaps even see you off.
(Brandon straightens
up)

I always hate to go home after
a party. Particularly if the
evening has been unusually sti-
mulating...or strange. Like this
evening.

PHILLIP:
What do you mean: strange?

RUPERT:
Did I say strange, Brandon?

BRANDON:
You often pick words that sound
rather than meaning.

RUPERT:
I don't really know what I meant.
Unless I was thinking of David.

BRANDON:
What was strange about David?

RUPERT:
His not showing up. You don't
suppose anything did happen to
him, do you?

BRANDON:
What could have?

RUPERT:
Oh, he might've been run over or
held up -

BRANDON:
In broad daylight?

RUPERT:
That's right. I'd forgotten. It
must've been broad daylight when
it happened.

BRANDON:
When what happened?

On this, his hand goes into his gun pocket. Now Rupert
notices. THE CAMERA MOVES IN SLOWLY as he raises his
glass and drinks.

RUPERT:
Whatever did happen to David.
Nothing I suppose.

THE CAMERA PULLS BACK. Brandon starts to relax. At this moment, Rupert, aware of the gun and of Brandon's intent has to make up his mind whether or not to pursue the course he has started on thus risk his life. He gets up and, turning his back to Brandon, stares thoughtfully ahead. From Brandon's angle, it looks as though Rupert is staring down at the chest.

RUPERT:
Still...where is he?

BRANDON:
(on guard again)
What's your theory?

RUPERT:
Mine? I was considering Janet's
for the moment.

BRANDON:
I didn't know she had one.

RUPERT:
Yes you do. I couldn't help over-
hearing before. I gather she thinks
you kidnapped David...or did something
to prevent him from coming.

BRANDON:
I'm not interested in Janet's prattle.
But you always interest me, Rupert.
Do you think I kidnapped David?

RUPERT:
It's the sort of mischief that would
have appealed to you at school. For
the excitement. The danger.

BRANDON:
It would be slightly more difficult
to pull off now, though, don't you
think?

RUPERT:
Oh, you'd find a way.

BRANDON:
How? I mean...suppose you were I.
How would you - got David out of
the way?

Brandon looks quizzically at Rupert. He is now trying
to test how much Rupert really knows.

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RUPERT:
Oh, you're much better at
that sort of thing than I
am, Brandon.

BRANDON:
But what would you do...if
you were I?

RUPERT:
Well...
... (smiles and puts
down his drink)
...if I wanted to get rid
of David, first I'd...invite
him for a drink. At the club
or some quiet little bar. Or
better yet, I'd invite him
here...so no one would see us
together.

BRANDON:
That's good. No witnesses.
Then what?

RUPERT:
Well, let's see. David would
arrive...

THE CAMERA TURNS AND APPROACHES the door to the foyer,
as:

RUPERT'S VOICE:
I'd take his hat in the hall
and bring him in here. I'd
offer him a drink and then he'd
probably sit down -

THE CAMERA HAS MOVED back into the room and turns to
focus on David's chair as:

BRANDON'S VOICE:
Yes.

RUPERT'S VOICE:
Now. David was very strong as
I recall so he'd probably have
to be knocked out...Oh. I know.
I'd have Phillip play the piano
while I walked quietly behind
the chair -

THE CAMERA HAS MOVED to the side of the chair.

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RUPERT'S VOICE:

...and hit him on the head with something...Now his body would fall forward to the floor.

On this, the CAMERA PANS to the floor in front of the chair.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

Just knocked out?

RUPERT'S VOICE:

Yes. Just knocked out.

BRANDON'S VOICE:

Where do you put him now?

The CAMERA MOVES OVER and the edge of the chest comes into the picture. Rupert's legs come into scene and beyond him but in the foreground, enough of Brandon to show his hand going again into the gun pocket.

RUPERT:

Well, I...

The CAMERA PANS UP to Rupert's face. He looks at the chest then shows he is aware of Brandon and the gun behind him. The CAMERA PULLS BACK ON:

RUPERT:

I think I'd get Phillip to help me carry him out of the room -
(moving a bit toward door)
- down the back stairs and together, we'd put him in the car.

The CAMERA MOVES BACK. Brandon comes forward, a momentary smile of relief on his face.

BRANDON:

You'd be seen.

RUPERT:

What?

BRANDON:

You said yourself if anything did happen, it must have happened in broad daylight.

RUPERT:

I'd forgotten...That means I'd have to hide the body someplace until dark.

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BRANDON:

Yes. You would. But where, Rupert?

Rupert strolls toward the chest and stands with his back to it.

RUPERT:

Well...

He hesitates. There is a crash. They turn to see that Phillip has hurled his glass into the fireplace.

PHILLIP:

Cat and mouse, cat and mouse.

BRANDON:

Phillip!

Phillip goes to the drink table and starts to pour another drink, saying almost to himself as he goes:

PHILLIP:

Only which is the cat and which is the mouse.

BRANDON:

(going to him)

That's enough of that.

PHILLIP:

Mind your own business.

BRANDON:

That's enough, Phillip.

PHILLIP:

(sharply)

I told you before: mind your own business.

Brandon hesitates, then turns to Rupert with a shrug.

BRANDON:

Well, it really isn't my business.
I'm not his keeper...With him in this condition, though, there doesn't seem to be much point in your staying, Rupert. That is -
(pointedly)
- unless you came back to find something besides your cigarette case.

RUPERT:

You mean, for example, to find whether you'd really gotten rid of David?

BRANDON:

Yes. That's what I mean.

A slight pause. Rupert is conscious of Brandon's hand in the gun pocket. He hesitates, then smiles.

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RUPERT:

You're as romantic as Janet. I don't think for one moment that you kidnapped David.

(Brandon relaxes; the hand comes out of his pocket)

Oh, I admit Janet put the notion in my head...but I'd never have mentioned it ...if it weren't that you seemed to be carrying fear of discovery in your pocket.

BRANDON:

What?

RUPERT:

That is a gun, isn't it?

BRANDON:

Oh...

RUPERT:

That teased my suspicions more than anything. To tell the truth, it really scares me a little.

BRANDON:

(laughs and takes out the gun)

Oh, I'm sorry. I don't blame you, but ...Here.

(tosses gun on the piano)

You can relax...I have to take it up to the country.

(moving to Phillip)

There've been several burglaries and poor mother's a bit on edge.

(to Phillip)

Finished?

PHILLIP:

All right.

(downs the last of his drink)

RUPERT:

Odd the way one can pyramid simple facts into wild fantasies, isn't it?

BRANDON:

(taking Phillip's glass)

We all do it. About finished, Rupert?

During the following, he returns Phillip's glass to the drink table, stopping on the way to turn out a lamp. This is his way of saying the evening and questioning are over. At the same time, Rupert moves casually to put himself between the gun and Brandon. This should face him so that his back is to Phillip.

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RUPERT:

Yes. I'll be running along.

But he makes no move. Instead, he casually feels the outside of right coat pocket and then puts his hand in.

THE CAMERA IS NOW ANGLED TO CATCH the two side windows beyond him. Just before Rupert finishes the following, the neon sign outside those windows goes on. Huge letters blink alternately red, white and green.

RUPERT:

It's a lovely night. You'll be driving up in good weather.

As he talks, the CAMERA SLOWLY MOVES IN and Rupert's hand comes out holding the piece of rope. CAMERA HOLDS on rope as Rupert, talking, turns his body and toys with the rope. THE CAMERA PANS OFF the rope to Phillip who is staring down it. All this during:

RUPERT:

I almost wish I were going with you. It might be rather exciting. Driving at night always is, but driving with you and Phillip now might have an additional element of -

PHILLIP:

(almost a whisper)

He's got it!

(Brandon turns. Then, a shout:)

HE'S GOT IT!

On this, he makes a dash for the gun. THE CAMERA WHIPS BACK. Phillip grabs the gun and holds it at Rupert. Simultaneously:

BRANDON:

Phillip!

PHILLIP:

(half to himself)

He knows he knows he knows!

Through this, Brandon starts to Phillip, saying:

BRANDON:

All right, Phillip. Easy. I'll take care of -

But Phillip swings so that he is covering both of them with the gun. He is building to sheer hysteria now. Brandon steps on:

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PHILLIP:

(to Brandon)

No you won't! I'd just as soon kill you as kill him. Sooner.

(tightly)

This is what you wanted, isn't it? Somebody else to know. Somebody else to see how brilliant you are. Just like in school. Well, I told you he'd find out!

(beginning to rant hysterically)

But you had to have him here and now we're done for! Now he knows! Now he -

BRANDON:

(over-lapping)

Shut up SHUT UP!

PHILLIP:

No! You made me do it and I hate you I hate both of us and I don't care any-

He has turned further toward Brandon on this, giving Rupert the opportunity to step closer to him. Now Rupert lunges for the gun. The movement startles Phillip into firing but Rupert closes in and wrenches the gun away from him. Doing so, he hurls Phillip away so that Phillip falls half on the piano bench, half on the treble section of the keys which clatter thinly. He buries his head in his arm, crying.

BRANDON:

Stupid, babbling drunk.
(coming closer)

I'm sorry, Rupert.

Rupert's hand has been grazed by the bullet. Now he takes out a handkerchief to sponge the blood, using this action to lighten the fact that he is pointing the gun directly at Brandon. Brandon stops in his tracks.

RUPERT:

That's all right...When you really want to kill, you don't miss. Not at that range.

(wipes his hand)

BRANDON:

Oh, of course he didn't want to kill you. He didn't know what he was doing...anymore than he knew what he was saying.

(trying to edge closer)

He - I didn't want anyone to know this, but - he's been becoming an alcoholic, Rupert, a dipsomani -

RUPERT:
(quietly, as he puts the
handkerchief back)
Please step over there, Brandon.
(gestures with the gun)

BRANDON:
(hesitates, then moves)
Phillip's drunk, Rupert. You don't take
those nightmare ideas of his serious -

RUPERT:
(cutting him quietly)
Brandon, I'm tired. In a way, I'm
frightened, too. But I don't want to
fence anymore.
(starts slowly toward chest)

BRANDON:
What are you going to do?

RUPERT:
I don't want to...but I'm going to look
inside that chest.

BRANDON:
Are you crazy?

RUPERT:
I hope so, I honestly hope so.

BRANDON:
Rupert, this has nothing to do with you.
Don't!

RUPERT:
I've got to.

BRANDON:
Rupert!

RUPERT:
I've got to look inside that chest.

BRANDON:
(a second, then:)
All right. GO AHEAD AND LOOK!

A pause. Rupert is at the chest now. He pauses, then,
still holding the gun, reaches down for the lid with
his free hand.

BRANDON:
(viciously)
I hope you like what you see!

Rupert shoots a look at him, then savagely throws back the lid of the chest. The pile of books on top slides to the floor with a thunderous crash. Rupert looks in the chest. Silence. Then:

RUPERT:

(very low)

No....No....

Quickly, he slams the lid down and moves from the chest as though to get away from the indecency.

BRANDON:

(the beginning of his plea)

Rupert...

RUPERT:

(almost to himself)

I couldn't really believe it was true.

BRANDON:

Rupert, please!

Rupert turns to him, pointing the gun.

RUPERT:

(harshly)

Please what?

BRANDON:

Listen to me, Rupert. Please listen. Please let me explain.

RUPERT:

Explain? Do you think you can explain that??

(indicating the chest)

BRANDON:

(violently)

Yes! To you I can! Because you'll understand!

RUPERT:

(angrily)

I'll understand?! What makes -

BRANDON:

(over-riding feverishly)

Rupert. Rupert, remember the discussion we had before with Mr. Kentley?

RUPERT:

Yes.

BRANDON:

Remember we said the lives of inferior beings are unimportant?

BRANDON:

Remember we said, we've always said, you and I, that moral concepts of good and evil and right and wrong don't hold for the intellectually superior? Remember, Rupert?

RUPERT:

(weaker)

Yes. I remember...

BRANDON:

(stuttering excitedly)

Well, that's all we've done, Rupert. That's all Phillip and I have done! He and I have lived what you and I have talked! I knew you'd understand because you have to, don't you see? You have to!

Rupert stares at him, then slowly sits down. There is a long pause.

RUPERT:

(quietly)

You have thrown my own words in my face, Brandon. You were right to. If nothing else, a man should stand by his words...But you have thrown the sound of reasoning at me, not reason itself. You have given my words a meaning I never dreamed of. You have tried to twist them into a cold, logical excuse for your ugly murder.

(his voice rising)

They never were that, Brandon, and you can't make them that. There must have been something deep in you, from the very first, to let you do this thing. But there has always been something deep in me that could never let me do it...or be a party to it now.

BRANDON:

(low)

What do you mean?

RUPERT:

(gets up; with mounting anger until he is almost in tears)

I mean tonight you have made me ashamed of every concept I have ever had of superior or inferior beings! But I thank you for that shame! Because now I know the truth, and the truth is that humanity cannot be divided into categories to suit our own ends. We are each of us a human

RUPERT: (Cont.)

being, Brandon, with the right to live and work and think as individuals! Yes, but with an obligation to the society we live in! By what right do you dare say there is a superior few to which you belong? By what right did you dare decide that that boy -

(indicating the chest)

- was inferior and could therefore be killed? Did you think you were God, Brandon? Is that what you thought when you choked the life from him? Is that what you thought when you served food from his grave?

(violently)

I don't know what you thought you were doing or what you are, but I do know what you've done! You've murdered. You've strangled a fellow human being who could live and laugh and love as you never could! And never will now!

(starts to window)

BRANDON:

What are you doing?

RUPERT:

It's not what I'm doing, Brandon. It's what society is going to do...What that will be, I don't know. But I can guess and I can help...You're going to die, Brandon. Both of you! You're going to die!

CAMERA GOES WITH HIM to the window, moving in to a CLOSE UP of the gun as Rupert raises it and fires three shots into the air. THE CAMERA NOW BEGINS TO MOVE BACK TO INCLUDE all three figures in the still room: Rupert at the window, Brandon watching him, and Phillip sitting tensely at the piano. As THE CAMERA MOVES BACK, we begin to hear sounds from the street below. First, a few excited questioning voices, then a police whistle, running feet, another police whistle. As Phillip hears these sounds, his body slowly relaxes.

PHILLIP:

(quietly)

They're coming...

He begins to pick out the same tune he has always played with one hand. A siren sounds.

PHILLIP:

(to himself, really)

It's all over...I'm glad.

As the siren comes closer, he continues to pick out the tune. But the voices, the whistles, the sirens, all got louder and louder. The world is beginning to know.

- THE END -