



*Dennis gets into the elevator carriage. The elevator rises to the upper-level study. Dennis emerges and walks over to the drinks cabinet.*

MAX. You know my brother had the finest collection of scotch in all the county.

ROBERT. Don't you think I know that, Cecil? He was my best friend.

MAX. Well he was my brother, Thomas.

ROBERT. Hang it all, Charley dead.

SANDRA. My fiancé dead, I can't bear it.

ROBERT. You aren't to leave my sight this evening, Florence.

*Dennis opens the drinks cabinet and takes out a full bottle of scotch.*

DENNIS. *(Into the voice pipe.)* Oh my God! He's drunk the whole bottle, sir. There's not a drop left.

ROBERT. *(Into the voice pipe.)* Hang it all, ther...

*Dennis realises and tries to get rid of the scotch, pouring it into the voice pipe. The scotch spurts out of Robert's end of the voice pipe, all over him. He quickly grabs the coal scuttle and catches the liquid inside.*

DENNIS. There's not a drop left!

*The bottle is now empty.*

ROBERT. *(Into the voice pipe.)* Hang it all, there's another in the cabinet.

*Dennis produces the empty bottle he should have got the first time from the bottom shelf of the cabinet.*

DENNIS. Yes, sir, of course you're right, this one's full.

ROBERT. This is horrifying. I mean who on earth would have a motivation to murder Charles Haversham?

*Dennis descends in the elevator, puts the bottle onto the tray of short glasses on the D.S. L. table and carries the tray past the window. As Dennis passes the window, Annie leans through and exchanges the empty bottle for a full plastic bottle labelled "WHITE SPIRIT" with a large flammable symbol on it. Dennis doesn't see the switch.*

SANDRA. I can't imagine!

MAX. It's madness! My brother was a good man. Who would kill him? I'm in shock, Thomas.

ROBERT. As am I, Cecil. As am I.

MAX. My brother murdered in his own home! This is unthinkable!

SANDRA. This is more than my nerves can take. I simply can't stand it. Thomas, I think I'm becoming hysterical!

ROBERT. No, Florence! Not another one of your episodes. Calm yourself. Here, take one of your pills.

MAX. Oh Florence, this is unbearable.

*Sandra begins to scream and pound Jonathan's chest. Jonathan flinches.*

Thomas, I feel I shall pass out.

ROBERT. Perkins! Pour that man a stiff drink!

*Dennis arrives D.S. R. and offers a glass to Max.*

MAX. Thank you, Perkins.

ROBERT. There, there, Florence, well done, deep breaths.

*Dennis pours the white spirit into Max's glass. Sandra becomes calmer.*

SANDRA. This is terrible, just a week after our engagement.

MAX. Well here's to a good brother.

*Max raises his glass and drinks the white spirit. He quickly spits it back out.*

That's the best whisky I've ever tasted.

ROBERT. Have another, to calm your nerves.

MAX. Make it a double!

*Dennis pours Max another glass of white spirit.*

SANDRA. Oh my Charles! My Charles! My head is spinning!

*Max drinks it again. He spits it out again.*

MAX. Calm down, Florence.

DENNIS. Another scotch, sir?

MAX. Yes!

SANDRA. I can't believe he was sat up here alone, drinking, when he was supposed to be downstairs with us.

*Max drinks again and spits it out again, this time right into Jonathan's face, who sits up in shock. Beat. Robert pushes Jonathan back down onto the chaise longue.*

MAX. My...

*He lets out a throaty squeak, the white spirit burning his mouth.*

My brother wasn't as happy as people were led to believe. Behind that cheery mask lay a darker side to the man that many didn't know about.

DENNIS. It's true, his smile was often merely *(Reads from his hand.)* a facade. *(Pronounced "fu-cayde.")* I was fortunate enough to be one of the few people who he really confided in. Damn it all, I've lost a true friend today.

ROBERT. We all have, Perkins. Hang it, I knew Charley ever since school.

SANDRA. I don't know how I'll ever recover from this.

ROBERT. You'll move back home with me. I'm your brother and I'll have it no other way.

MAX. Perkins is right, my brother was hiding a deep sense of melancholy and resentment. I have no doubt in my mind it was suicide.

DENNIS. Suicide, Mr. Haversham? How can you say that! Of course not, it's murder. Murder in the first degree.

MAX. Nonsense!

*Max performs a gesture for "nonsense." If the audience laugh, Max can acknowledge them here by smiling and repeating the gesture.*

*Nonsense!* My brother was paranoid and jealous and I can prove it. Perkins, hand me his journal, it's there on the mantelpiece.

*Annie's hand reaches through the door and holds the journal against the wall where it should have been above the fireplace. Dennis passes it to Max.*

Thank you, Perkins. Why, look at the last entry. *(Not looking at the journal.)* "I fear Florence does not love me. The night of our engagement party, despair engulfs my soul."

SANDRA. But I loved Charles with all my heart.

*Dennis takes the journal and puts it back where the mantel-piece should be; it falls straight to the floor. Annie's hand reaches back through the door to catch it, but she is just too late.*

MAX. As I said: driven mad with paranoia and jealousy.

*All gasp and face out. Silence. The cast wait for a sound effect that doesn't happen. Eventually Trevor realises he's missed his cue.*

TREVOR. Oh no!

*Trevor hits a button. A loud door chime sounds.*

ALL. The Inspector!

SANDRA. Thank heavens he's here.

*Chris (now in costume, playing Inspector Carter) enters through the door with paper snowflakes on his head and shoulders. He carries an attaché case.*

CHRIS. What a terrible snowstorm. Good evening, I'm Inspector Carter. Take my case.

DENNIS. Yes, Inspector.

*Chris hands his case to Dennis, who places it on the floor by the table.*

CHRIS. This must be Charles Haversham. I'm sorry. This must've given you all a damn shock.

SANDRA. It did, we're all still reeling.

CHRIS. Naturally. Tell me, are any of you the deceased's immediate family?

MAX. I'm Cecil Haversham. I'm his brother.

SANDRA. *(Smiling.)* I'm Florence Colley Moore. I'm his fiancée. Tonight was our engagement party.

CHRIS. I take it everyone is assembled in here?

ROBERT. Yes. The only other member of staff is Arthur the Gardener, but I saw him and Winston leaving for the weekend hours ago.

CHRIS. Winston?