

"THE

VOICE

OF

JEROME

KEDDLE."

A Thriller in Three Acts

by

"PHILLIP UNDERWOOD"

RUSSELL J. OAKES.

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THE VOICE OF JEROME KEDDLE -

The Scene is the same throughout the Play. There are no changes.

C H A R A C T E R S

(in order of their appearance)

ESMA KEDDLE

JIM ELDER

EMID, Jim's wife

CRISBY, Esma's nephew

Sgt. WRIGHT, a Police Sergeant

Mrs. MAXWELL

JEROME KEDDLE, Esma's husband

DAYNE STROM, a neighbour,

EDDY QUILTON

TROOPER GORDON.

Scene throughout is the Hall of "Stormont Station", a lonely house, ten miles out from a small country town. The action all takes place in one night, from soon after dusk until dawn.

ACT ONE

SCENE: THE HALL OF A SOMBER HOUSE. ON CURTAIN RISE THE STAGE IS EMPTY BUT SOMEONE IS KNOCKING AT DOOR CENTRE BACK. THERE IS A PAUSE. THE KNOCKING IS REPEATED. ESMA KEDDLE APPEARS ON STAIRS DOWN RIGHT. SHE CROSSES TO WINDOW RIGHT OF DOORWAY AND PEEPS OUT. AS KNOCKING IS REPEATED SHE GOES TO DOOR AND LISTENS.

ESMA What do you want? (SHE IS SUSPICIOUS)

JIM (OFF) Is this Stormont Station please?

ESMA Yes. Who is that?

JIM We are Mr. and Mrs. Elder

ESMA Oh, yes, yes. (RELIEVED SHE OPENS THE DOOR)
Come inside, Mr. Elder (THEY ENTER AND ESMA CLOSSES THE DOOR)

THEY ARE A SOPHISTICATED COUPLE STRANGLE CONTRASTING WITH ESMA'S QUIET RESERVE AND SUSPICITION.

ENID We owe you an apology for coming at this time of night, I'm afraid.

ESMA I was not expecting you until the morning.

ENID I know. It's so lonely out here. I suppose you are nervous of strangers.

ESMA Not only of strangers, Mrs. Elder.

JIM, HAVING PUT SUITCASE ASIDE, COMES DOWN. ESMA IS AT L.C., THE ELDERS R.C.

ENID We were anxious to sleep in the our new home. That's why we came; but we had a mishap with the car and that delayed us. We'd have been here in daylight otherwise.

ESMA Not a serious mishap, I hope?

ENID Oh no, but it held us up for a while. It seems a long way from town. How far is it?

ESMA Almost ten miles. Won't you sit down? (ENID SITS ON RIGHT OF TABLE. ESMA ON SETTEE) I hope you won't find it too lonely out here.

ENID We will, at first, but I was hoping you would stay on with us, Mrs. Keddle.

ESMA Did you ever see Mr. Forsythe?

ENID The last owner? Oh yes.

ESMA We have seen very little of him. He was always abroad.

ENID Mrs. Keddle, you will stay on with us, won't you?

ESMA I have my husband and nephew to consider, Mrs. Elder.

ENID Oh, I'd forgotten they live here with you.

ESMA (RISING) Before I show you to your room I - I think I had better mention something.

ENID What is that?

ESMA My husband has not been in the best of health. If he seems... difficult... will you excuse him?

ENTER CRISBY UP L. HE IS IN A DRESSING GOWN WORN OVER HIS ORDINARY TROUSERS

AND WEARS SLIPPERS. HE HAS NO SHIRT, JUST THE TROUSERS, SLIPPERS AND DRESSING GOWN.

A MOROSE YOUNGSTER, HE IS SHY IN THE PRESENCE OF THESE OBVIOUSLY SOPHISTICATED YOUNG PEOPLE. HE STOPS ON SEEING THEM.

CRISBY Oh....

JIM (CHEERFULLY) Goodnight.

CRISBY (HESITATES) Goodnight.

ESMA Mrs.Elder, this is my nephew, Crisby. Crisby, Mr. and Mrs. Elder. (AN EXCHANGE OF GREETINGS)

CRISBY (CAREFULLY) We weren't expecting you tonight. If we had known you were coming we would have made arrangements to go.
(JIM TO R. OF ENID WHO SITS)

JIM I'm glad you didn't go. It's a pleasure to meet you all

CRISBY I hope you can say the same about my Uncle.

ESMA (REPROVINGLY) Crisby. (HE SHRUGS HIS SHOULDERS)

CRISBY They might as well know.

ENID Know...what?

ESMA There is no need to worry, Mrs.Elder. My husband will be leaving with us in the morning.

CRISBY You will be glad of that.

ENID What do you mean?

ESMA Don't be alarmed. It is just that Jerome has developed an... an obsession. He thinks he owns this house.

JIM Owns it?

ESMA There won't be any trouble.

THE ELDERS REGARD EACH OTHER UNEASILY.

ESMA You will find this very different to the city, Mrs.Elder.

ENID I suppose we will. No more swimming and parties.

JIM And no more psych. classes.

CRISBY Psych?

JIM Psychology. We did a course at the University.

CRISBY Oh! I didn't know they taught psychology at Universities.

JIM Well, where in the world have you been all your life?

CRISBY (BITTERLY) Not in a city with your opportunities.

JIM: I say, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be rude.

CRISBY That's all right. It's nothing. (GOES TO WINDOW)

ENID Haven't you ever been away from this district?

CRISBY No.

JIM Do you mean to say you haven't wanted to see other places?

CRISBY (PREVIOUSLY) Of course I've wanted to see them (HE CATCHES ESMA'S GLANCE UPON HIM) but I'm not going; not now.

ESMA I tell him he should, but he won't. I'm quite safe, really.

ENID Why should you be otherwise? It is lonely, I know, but...

ESMA Hush. Jerome is coming.

CRISBY GOES UPSTAGE. JEROME ENTERS BY PASSAGE BELOW STAIRS. HE COMES IN NOT EXPECTING TO SEE ANYONE. ABOUT TO CROSS; HE STOPS ON SEEING ELDERS.

ENID Goodnight, Mr.Keddle

JEROME (IGNORES HER) Esma. Who are these people?

ESMA Mr. and Mrs.Elder, my husband.

JIM How do you do. (JEROME GLARES AT THEM)

JEROME What are you doing in my house?

ESMA You have been here for so long, Jerome, that you forget it is not your house.

JEROME You should not have come. I suppose you think you can take some of my gold from me. (ELDERS ARE STARTLED)

JIM Some of your what?

ESMA Oh, Jerome...

JEROME Quiet, Esma. You cannot stay here, you understand? You cannot stay here.

JIM But we have bought the house, Mr.Keddle.

JEROME Bought it? You have bought my house? Absurd. You have not consulted me about it.

JIM It is not your house, nor was it ever yours. The owner....

JEROME I am the owner of Stormont Station and I won't have strangers coming here to upset me.

JIM Upset you? Well, I like that.

JEROME(You will not stay, you hear?

JIM Now, Mr.Keddle, be reasonable . We have bought this property. Isn't that clear enough? We have bought it and you must leave.

JEROME Leave Stormont? If You are mad?

EMA Please Jerome...

JEROME You keep out of this, Esma.

ESMA Mr.Elder...

JEROME Stop interfering, Esma. I will not have you interfering.

JIM Mr.Keddle. If you have something of value hidden here, as you hinted a moment ago, then I'll give you twenty four hours to get it and yourself off the premises.

JEROME What? You order me? You dare to order me about? I take orders from no one. No one.

JIM Mr.Keddle, you understand? You've got to get out.

ENID Please, Jim...

JIM Good Lord, if we can't take possession of our own property....

JEROME Words; words. Your property indeed.

ENID (RISES TO JEROME) But Mr.Keddle, Jim is right. The house IS ours.

JEROME I'll hear no more. Get away from me. GET AWAY.

ENID But...(JEROME RAISES STAFF AND ENID STARTS BACK WITH A GASP OF ALARM. JIM INTERVENES AND TAKES THE BLOW ON HIS OWN ARM)

ESMA Jerome! (JIM AND JEROME GLARE AT ONE ANOTHER)

JIM (QUINFLY) Keddle, I could kill you for that.

ENID Jim, you mustn't say things like that.

JIM He was going to strike you.

JEROME (INDICATING JIM) Esma, you heard what he said? You heard him threaten me?

CRISBY Mr.Elder did not mean what he said, Jerome.

JIM I meant it all right. You hear me, Kiddle? If you life a finger against my wife again, I'll kill you.

CRISBY Please, Mr.Elder....

JIM (PAUSE) I'm sorry. I lost my temper.

JEROME If you touch me you will be punished. (CHUCKLES THEN TURNS AND EXITS R. CRISBY STANDS L.C. LOOKING AFTER HIM? HIS HANDS CLENCHED).

CRISBY (SAVAGELY) That's why I don't want to go away. (HE SITS AT HIS DESK)

ENID Oh, he's ...he's awful. Why don't you leave him?

ESMA (BITTERLY) Why don't I (SPECULATIVELY) Why DON'T I?

STROM ENTERS QUICKLY AT L. TO L. OF ESMA

STROM Esma. Did I hear Jerome again?

ESMA STOPS HIM AND HE SEES THE ELDERS.

ESMA Mrs.Elder this is Mr.Strom, a neighbour of ours. He was good enough to help us with your furniture. Mr.Strom, Mr. and Mrs.Elder are the new owners of Stormont.

STROM Oh yes. We tried to get the house ready in time for you.

JIM I have to go into town but I'll be back before eleven.

ENID Couldn't you go in the morning, Jim?

JIM No, I'll get it done tonight. It's a little business I have to fix about the house.

ESMA I was making some coffee when you came. Won't you have a cup first? Its such a hot close night.

JIM Thank you. I wouldn't mind.

ESMA EXITS UP L. CRISBY WRITING AT DESK. RATHER A PEREMPTORY KNOCK COMES AT THE DOOR C.B. AND ALL LOOK UP. STROM HESITATES THEN GOES TO DOOR AND OPENS IT. HE IS STARTLED.

STROM What do you want? (HE RECOVERS HIS COMPOSURE) Oh, it's you.

HE ADMITS SERGEANT WRIGHT WHO ENTERS CASUALLY TO STROM'S R.

WRIGHT Conscience troubling you? (REMOVING MOTORING GLOVES)

STROM I couldn't see you in the dark.

WRIGHT I work in the dark, a lot. (HE SEES ELDERS AND REMOVES HIS HELMET) Oh. I hope I'm not intruding.

CRISBY Evidently it makes no difference whether you are or not.

WRIGHT (FACETIOUSLY) Hello. Our conscientious student. Well, stick at it Crisby and one of these days they will make you a police sergeant.

STROM Heaven forbid. (SITS ON L. END OF SETTEE) Did you come to see me, Sergeant?

WRIGHT No, Mr. Strom. How would I expect to find you here?

STROM IS EMBARRASSED TO WRIGHT'S SECRET AMUSEMENT.

I did come on duty, though. Excuse me. You are the people who are taking over Stormont Station?

JIM Yes. My name is Elder. May I introduce my wife.

WRIGHT (CLICKS HIS HEELS SMARTLY TO STROM'S AMUSEMENT) How do I'm Sergeant Wright. As I'm stationed in the town you'll see quite a lot of me.

STROM They will. Did you say you had come on duty, Sergeant?

ELDER SITS AGAINST TABLE TO L. OF ENID.

WRIGHT I have to keep my eye on things in general.

STROM You are not after me, then?

WRIGHT Not this time.

STROM Oh, then I am on your list? What would you want me for? Grand Larceny? Arson? Forgery?

WRIGHT That's an idea. I could suspect you of having a forging machine in your cellar on the main road.

STROM What would I want to forge?

WRIGHT A good reputation....and unless I'm mistaken I'd have a pack of bother distinguishing it from the genuine article.

STROM (TO ELDERS) Don't take us seriously; will you? We amuse ourselves like this. We get little enough amusement otherwise.

JIM Oh, go ahead. We don't mind.

ENID I hope you don't think we are going to trouble you, Sergeant.

WRIGHT I promise not to touch you, unless you run out into the bush and scream at night.

STROM REVEALS ANTAGONISTIC INTEREST

ENID My goodness, whatever do you mean by that?

WRIGHT (DELIBERATELY) It frightens people.

A PAUSE. ELDERS ARE PERPLEXED, THE OTHERS NERVOUS AND SUSPICIOUS. WRIGHT BECOMES CASUAL AGAIN AND SAUNDERS ACROSS R. AND HANGS HIS HELMET ON STAND.

STROM (HARSHLY) Sergeant; you have been complaining about Jerome for three months. Why don't you DO something about it? Get him put away?

WRIGHT (RETURNS C.) I can't. If a man takes it into his head to scream to protect his property, I can't stop him.

STROM It is not his property to begin with. It belongs to the Elders, now. Haven't there been any complaints?

WRIGHT There have been more than complaints, Mr. Strom. Firstly Mrs. Maxwell tells me that if it continues she will go stark staring mad.

STROM: Mrs. Maxwell's house is two miles away.

WRIGHT I know, but it seems to be disturbing her nevertheless. Secondly the noise has caused an accident.

GRISBY (SHARPLY) An accident?

WRIGHT Yes.

STROM What was it?

WRIGHT Eddy Quilton was passing on his horse tonight and when Jerome started his yelling out there the horse took fright, threw Eddy and nearly broke his neck.

GRISBY A pity it hadn't.

WRIGHT I thought he was a friend of yours.

GRISBY Eddie Quilton is no friend of mine.

STROM Now, I suppose, he wants to claim compensation from Keddle, for frightening his horse.

WRIGHT Eddy's not an optimist. No. I came to tell Jerome it's got to stop.

ENTER ESMA UP L. WITH TRAY, CUPS AND COFFEE ETC.

ESMA (QUIETLY) Good night Sergeant.

WRIGHT (DROPS HIS BANtering TONE) Good night, Mrs. Keddle.

ESMA (BRINGS TRAY TO TABLE DOWN L.) Would you like some coffee too, Sergeant?

WRIGHT No, thank you. I would like to speak to your husband.

ESMA Most people avoid speaking to him.

WRIGHT Sorry. I should have said "Duty compels me to speak to him."

ESMA That is much more frank and understandable. No coffee, you said?

WRIGHT No thank you.

STROM He doesn't know what's in it, Mrs. Keddle.

ESMA There would be no reason to offer Sergeant Wright anything but coffee. (SARCASM)

JIM I don't know. I should say it would be rather useful to have the representative of the Law out of the way for awhile.

ESMA AND STROM LOOK AT WRIGHT. WRIGHT SMILES AND TURNS R.

STROM: Yes, it would, wouldn't it, Mr. Elder.

ENID: (A LITTLE EMBARRASSED BY THE UNDERCURRENT) Let me help you with the coffee. (SHE CROSSES TO ESMA PUTTING HER PURSE ON TABLE DOWN L.)

WRIGHT: I'm very dangerous really. I know so much about everyone.

ESMA Why did you wish to see my husband Sergeant?

GIVES CUP TO ENID WHO GOES WITH IT TO STROM

WRIGHT It's about the noise he's been making out in the bush.

JIM SITS IN CHAIR VACATED BY ENID

ESMA You must make allowances, Sergeant.

ENID TAKES CUP TO CRISBY. ESMA TAKES PLATE OF CAKE TO TABLE R.C. AND CUTS IT WITH KNIFE LEAVING KNIFE AND PLATE ON TABLE. GIVES JIM CUP AS SHE COMES.

WRIGHT I am doing so. That's why I am here. Mrs. Maxwell is quite convinced that he is mad.

ESMA Mrs. Maxwell is a busybody.

WRIGHT NEVERTHELESS I think she is quite justified in complaining. (SITS ON TABLE)

ESMA Then why doesn't she complain to me instead of running to the police?

WRIGHT I passed her on the road, tonight. Perhaps she IS coming here. Keep her some coffee, won't you?

ENID HELPS HERSELF TO COFFEE AND SITS BESIDE STROM ON SETTEE

ESMA If she is coming here then it is a pity you were not justified in suspecting my coffee.

WRIGHT (PLAYFULLY) Oh, Mrs. Kettle.

ESMA And I'll wager she is not coming to complain. (RETURNS TO TABLE DOWN L.) She dreads approaching the place, which shows there is truth in the prayer for "small mercies."

STROM Give the woman credit for being sociable.

ESMA Sociable (SHE GRUNTS) She will be coming to find out all she can about the newcomers to Stormont.

ENID (ANNOYED) Well, I'm glad someone is taking an interest in us, even though it is prompted by personal curiosity.

WRIGHT Mrs. Elder, we are all interested, but we'll leave speeches to the Mayor (BRIGHTLY) We have one. Probably he is suffering from acute literary gestation at the moment - but don't expect anything too original.

STROM You shouldn't be a policeman with such a flow of eloquence.

WRIGHT I have to be a lot of things you won't find defined under the word 'policeman' in the dictionary.

STROM For example?

WRIGHT Well....(HE CHANGES HIS MIND ABRUPTLY) I'm a fool.

STROM Give me your reason and I'll tell you if it's the same one as mine.

WRIGHT Because I talk too much.

STROM But you are never dull, Sergeant.

WRIGHT (A KNOCK COMES ON DOOR C.B.) Oh, Mrs.Keddle. You may pour Mrs.Maxwell's coffee. (GOES UP AND OPENS DOOR) Come inside, Mrs.Maxwell.

SHE ENTERS AND HE CLOSSES DOOR.

MRS.M. (BRIGHTLY) I thought you were coming here, Sergeant.

WRIGHT (BRIGHTLY) I was.

ESMA (POURING COFFEE) Good night, Mrs.Maxwell.

MRS.M. (ON L. OF ST.) Good night, Mrs.Keddle. Oh, I didn't know you had visitors.

STROM (BLANDLY TO WORLD AT LARGE) Liar.

WRIGHT (HASTILY) Mrs.Maxwell, Mrs.Elder and Mr.Elder.

(JIM RISES AND ACKNOWLEDGES IT)

JIM Take my seat, Mrs.Maxwell.

MRS. M. Thank you.

SHE DOES SO. JIM BEHIND TABLE R.C. WRIGHT TAKES COFFEE FROM ESMA AND GIVES IT TO MRS.MAXWELL.

Of course, you are the new....yes, yes. I mistn't stay long.

SHE TAKES OFF HER HAT AS TROUGH PREPARING FOR A LONG STAY.

WRIGHT COFFEE, Mrs.Maxwell?

MRS. M. Is this for me? How nice. I really didn't expect.... it's so warm outside, isn't it? I saw you coming this way Sergeant Wright but I didn't like to ask where you were going.

WRIGHT No.

MRS. MAX. But do you know, I wondered what could be bringing you.

WRIGHT Did you?

MRS. M. Not that I'm inquisitive, but you never come up here, do you, Sergeant?

WRIGHT Very rarely.

MRS. M. And....and I wondered. (SHE PREFERS OUT AND TURNS TO HER COFFEE)

ENID You live near here, Mrs.Maxwell?

MRS. M. Yes. No. That is, two miles away. We'll be neighbours.

STROM It's nice to have nice neighbours.

WRIGHT You think so? (STROM DISCOMFITED)

MRS.M. But fancy you wanting to come tonight when you could have left it till the morning.
(PUTS DOWN HER COFFEE)

ENID Why? (JEROME ENTERS AT R. ENMA U.S. BY CRISBY)

MRS. M. (WHISPERING) Don't you know about that man?

ENID What man?

JEROME Still here? Still here?

MRS. MAXWELL GETS A SHOCK AND CROSSED QUICKLY TO SIT BESIDE ENID ON SETTEE.

MRS. M. Oh. Oh. Goodnight, Mr. Keddle (TO ENID) That's the one.

ENMA, ABOUT TO CROSS DOWN TO JIM, STOPS. KEDDLE NOW AT C. WRIGHT COMES DOWN TO HIS RIGHT.

WRIGHT Mr. Keddle...

JEROME What? You, Sergeant? And very opportune, too. You saw them whispering together, 'eh? They want my gold, that's what it is, but they won't get it. I call on you as a man of the law to see I am protected.

ENMA GOES DOWN L. TO TABLE PUTTING PLATE ON IT THEN RETURNS TO BEHIND SETTEE.

WRIGHT Mr. Keddle. You must stop making commotions in the bush.

JEROME What commotions?

WRIGHT You have been causing disturbances at night by screaming.

JEROME I must frighten them away. I will not let them come near by gold.

WRIGHT I assure you they won't come near your gold and there is no need to go on repeating these cries. Tonight you scared a horse and it threw its rider. (CRISBY WATCHES)

JEROME That serves him right for trespassing.

WRIGHT You forget the main road runs alongside this property a few hundred yards from here.

JEROME He was watching me to see where I hid my money.

WRIGHT Nothing of the sort. (GRASPS JEROME) Now, listen to me, Keddle, these disturbances have got to stop.

JEROME IS SCARED AND BEGINS TO FAWN ON THE SERGEANT.

JEROME You do not understand, Sergeant. I have my reasons for doing this.

WRIGHT If not, then I'll have to shove you into jail and your precious gold will be left to look after itself.

JEROME No, no. You would not do that, Sergeant. You would not be so cruel.

WRIGHT I will be if these noises don't stop.

JEROME But don't you see? I am impregnating this place with my voice. I go there and each time I leave a little more of it so that when I die my voice will still be there and it will go on shrieking to frighten my murderer.

WRIGHT Murderer? Keddle, this is nonsense. No one wants to murder you.

JEROME No, you say? No? When I have been threatened this very night under my own roof?

WRIGHT It is not your roof but we'll let that pass. What did you mean about being threatened?

JEROME He said he would kill me, Sergeant. He threatened me.

WRIGHT Threatened you? Who did?

JEROME That man (POINTS AT JIM) He threatened me not half an hour ago. He said I was a scoundrel and he would kill me.

WRIGHT Can you explain what he means, Mr.Elder?

JIM (DOWN R.) Yes. I..I did say that but it was only in the heat of the moment. He struck me with his cane and I was angry.

WRIGHT Anger of that sort can get people into nasty trouble.

JIM I know and I am sorry. I offer Mr.Keddle my apologies.

JEROME Apologies! What are apologies? (HE TURNS AWAY) Worthless expressions of remorse. All the remorse in the world will not bring me back after he has killed me.

JIM Oh, what rot.

WRIGHT Do you mind if I speak with Jerome alone, Mrs.Keddle?

ESMA No, Sergeant. His room is at the end of the passage.

WRIGHT Thank you. Mr.Keddle, come with me for a while. I want to talk to you.

HE EXITS WITH KEDDLE BEHIND STAIRS AT R. JEROME IS ESPOSTULATING.

ESMA Would you like me to show you to your room, Mrs.Elder?

ENID Shall we go up, Jim?

GRISBY EXITS UP L. PUTTING CUP DOWN L. AS HE GOES.

JIM I've got that matter to fix in town.

MRS.M. Ware you going into town tonight, Mr.Elder?

JIM Yes. (MRS. MAXWELL RISES)

MRS. M. I wonder...would it be too much to ask you to walk along with me? I have almost two miles to walk and it's so very dark.

JIM My car's outside. I'll drive you along.

MRS. M. That's very kind. I get so frightened of the bush at night. Silly of me, I know, but it's inherent. (IMPORTANTLY) One can't alter one's inherent emotions, can one?

ENID RISES SETTING CUP ON TABLE DOWN L.

ENID Come up to my room until Jim is ready to do.

ENID COLLECTS MRS.MAXWELL AND CROSSED TOWARDS STAIRS R.

MRS. MAX. Oh, thank you, Mrs.Elder. It IS Elder, isn't it?

ESMA It is the room directly above this, Mrs.Elder. You can't miss it. I'll clear away these few things before I join you.

ENID AND MRS.MAXWELL EXIT UP THE STAIRS.

ESMA Mr.Elder.

JIM Yes, Mrs.Keddle?

ESMA I'm sorry my husband caused this trouble. You see, he has cared for this place for so long that he imagines he owns it.

JIM That doesn't matter, Mrs.Keddle. I should be apologising to y' I have a rotten temper at times. No harm done.

STROM PUTS DOWN HIS CUP ON TABLE DOWN L.

ESMA I'M glad you take that attitude. Of course, now that you have come, we will leave as soon as we can.

JIM Thank you.

JIM EXITS UPSTAIRS. STROM HAS SAT DOWN AGAIN.

STROM And where will you go?

(ESMA TAKES UP MRS. MAXWELL'S CUP ON TABLE DOWN L.)

ESMA Wherever Jerome goes, I expect.

STROM You are a fool, Esma.

ESMA Why, Dayne? (PUTS MRS. M'S. CUP ON TABLE DOWN L.)

STROM You're sacrificing something very very precious to something that's worthless.

ESMA I am not sacrificing anything.

STROM. You are. You're throwing aside everything that's worth while. Denying yourself the one thing that tends towards any happiness.

ESMA There is Jerome.

STROM What does he matter? You've tied yourself to him because of a misplaced sense of fidelity.

ESMA It's not fidelity, Dayne. If only you knew how I hated him, sometimes, you wouldn't say that.

STROM Then what is it?

ESMA I....I don't know. I can't help myself. Jerome wasn't always like this. You know that. He has changed. He thinks of nothing save that money and he's afraid. He's afraid in case someone should come and take it from him.

STROM Some day some one will. (RISES TO HER) Esma. Why waste your time here? You can't be happy. Look! You even carry your hands closed as though you are fighting inwardly all the time. (HE COVERS HER HAND WITH HIS BUT SHE DRAWS IT AWAY) Esma. Don't fight me any longer. I can't stand it, seeing you like this all the time.

ESMA No, Dayne; no matter what you do you can't alter Destiny. This is part of my Destiny, my life. I've got to live it. Everything is planned ahead for us and we must accept it. If we tried to change things now we'd be interfering. We'd only make things worse.

ESMA You're wrong, Esma. We could make them so much better.

ESMA I want to believe you, Dayne, oh I want to....but it's too late now.

STROM Everyone has a right to happiness. It's never too late to find it. (HE TURNS HER AROUND BUT SHE WILL NOT LOOK AT HIM) What is there in this dreadful house for you? What is there for you anywhere with Jerome? He's going mad. Esma....

ESMA Hush, Dayne. According to the Law Jerome is still my husband.

STROM. The law is not always right. Sometimes it is better to go against the law. Sometimes even murder can bring happiness.

ESMA Do you think so?

STROM I am sure of it. Esma, you's got to come away with me. Please. You must.

ESMA I want to, Dayne.

STROM You do love me, don't you?

ESMA No-no. I haven't a right to. (BRUSHES PAST HIM AND GOES TO TABLE L.) Not while Jerome is alive.

STROM (GLOOMILY) Why can't he die. (A PAUSE)

ESMA PUTS CROCKERY ONTO TRAY. STROM HEARS JEROME AND WRIGHT COMING AND GOES UP TO DOOR C.B. WRIGHT STRIDES IN FROM R. PULLING ON GLOVES, FOLLOWED BY JEROME, INDIGNANT.

JEROME Sergeant Wright. You cannot say this to me.

WRIGHT I can say it and I'm saying it. It's got to stop.

GOES UP R. FOR HAT LEAVING JEROME AT CENTRE. STROM EXITS QUIETLY C.B. LEAVING DOOR OPEN.

JEROME It will never stop, Sergeant. Will it Esma? You know it won't, don't you, eh? Even after they have murdered me, I will protect my gold. I will send back my voice, won't I, Esma, eh? I will stay out there in the bush and shriek at them and perhaps I will come back to tell you who did it.

WRIGHT You won't stay here long if you do because from tonight this house belongs to the Elders.

ESMA EXITS UP L. WITH TRAY , COFFEE...ETC.

JEROME They cannot do this to me. Strangers cannot turn me out of my own house.

WRIGHT It's not your house. You understand, Kettle? It's not your house. You weren't the owner and you've got to get out.

JEROME Sergeant. You wouldn't send me away, would you? You wouldn't force me to go? Here I am safe but anywhere else they would get me. Sergeant, you are a good man, really. You wouldn't drive me away.

WRIGHT Listen Mr.Kettle. No one wants to harm you. This is all a delusion of yours.

JEROME But Sergeant, you heard HIM confess he had threatened me. (HE INDICATES HIM UPSTAIRS)

WRIGHT Yes, but...

JEROME And the others....they hate me, Sergeant. They hate me. That man...that Strom...he would kill me.

WRIGHT What makes you say that?

JEROME (SECRETIVELY) Because he is mad and mad people kill without reason.

WRIGHT (OMINOUSLY) Yes. I know that.

JEROME And Esma. She is a little mad, too, frankly. There, Sergeant, three people who would kill me if they had the chance. I don't mind dying. It's not that, but what would happen to my gold? The gold I've hidden out there?

WRIGHT If you came away with me you could bring your gold with you. I could take you to a house that has a nice high wall around it and no one could get in. How would that suit you?

JEROME That sounds good, Sergeant. I could go there but what about tonight?

WRIGHT Stay here tonight but tomorrow morning I'll tell my friends to expect you.

STROM Thank you, Sergeant. I did not think you could be so kind. I shall remember this.

WRIGHT Yes, do. But I'll have to go. Now you won't quarrel with them any more tonight.

JEROME No, no. But supposing they try to kill me before morning?

WRIGHT If they had wanted to kill you they'd have done it long ago.

JEROME Yes, yes. That is true. Then it must be the strange one upstairs with his wife and Mrs. Maxwell. He is the one who will try to do it.

WRIGHT (WEAKLY) I can't stay here talking. It's getting late.

ENTER ESMA UP L. SHE GOES TO L. WINDOW AND CLOSSES SHUTTER.
Mrs. Maxwell gone, Mrs. Keddle?

ESMA No, she is upstairs with Mrs. Elder. Mr. Elder is going into town and he is driving Mrs. Maxwell in on the way.

WRIGHT Mrs. Elder staying here until he gets back?

ESMA Why, yes. (JEROME HAS MOVED DOWN R.)

JEROME That is a trick. (WRIGHT AND ESMA EXCHANGE A GLANCE. ESMA GOES L.) He goes into town to put me off my guard while she does the spying but she won't find where I've hidden it. She won't find out.

EXITS BY PASSAGE BEHIND STAIRS LAUGHING. ESMA TURNS TO DOOR C.B.
WRIGHT IS BEHIND TABLE R.C.

ESMA (CALLING OFF C.B.) Oh, Dayne. (SHE STOPS BUT WRIGHT IS QUICK TO NOTICE THE MISTAKE. HE LOOKS THOUGHTFUL. ESMA CORRECTS HER MISTAKE)
Mr. Strom!

STROM (APPEARS IN DOORWAY C.B.) Yes? (ESMA CLOSES DOOR)

ESMA Crisby asked me would I send you in. He's having trouble with the questions you set for him.

STROM Certainly. (GOING L.) He's in his room, is he?

ESMA Yes. You'll see the light.

STROM EXITS UP L. AND ESMA COMES TO SETTEE AND SITS.

WRIGHT Dayne Strom has done a lot for Crisby, hasn't he?

ESMA Why shouldn't he? He has the knowledge and Crisby learns quickly. (WRIGHT AT TABLE R.C. SITS AGAINST IT)

WRIGHT It's a shame Crisby never had a better chance, isn't it?

ESMA I've wanted him to go away often but he won't leave me now.

WRIGHT No. He's getting older though and he may make a fight for it. It's too bad he's been so...so repressed because if anything breaks it'll be like a dam bursting. (RISES) Well, I don't suppose I'll see you before you leave in the morning. Going away from the district altogether, Mrs. Keddle?

ESMA Yes. (WRIGHT COMES TO HER)

WRIGHT Do you mind if I say something before I go?

ESMA Well?

WRIGHT (EAGERLY) Get Crisby away from Jerome. Make him leave you. And you...why don't you get away as well? All this trouble with your husband ... (SHE LOOKS UP AT HIM) I know it's not my business but now it's causing accidents. Eddy Quilton, for instance, thrown off his horse. Jerome shouldn't be here. There are homes....and institutes.

ESMA My husband will never enter any institute.

WRIGHT I think he might. As it is I have him interested in the idea.

ESMA You misinterpreted my meaning, Sergeant.

WRIGHT (HARDLY) I sincerely hope I did not.

A THUMP COMES AT THE DOOR C.B. STARTLING THEM...ESMA LOOKS AT WRIGHT FEARFULLY. THEN GOES U.S.

WRIGHT More visitors.

HE CROSSES TO DESK UP L. ESMA OPENS DOOR CAUTIOUSLY.

ESMA (ALARMED) Oh. (ABOUT TO CLOSE THE DOOR)

EDDY (OFF) Stand aside and let me in.

ESMA DOES SO AND EDDY QUILTON ENTERS TO HER L. LOOKS ABOUT TRUCULENTLY BUT DOES NOT SEE WRIGHT BEHIND HIM AT L.

ESMA What do you want?

EDDY Where's your husband? (WRIGHT DRAWS REVOLVER QUIETLY)

ESMA Why do you want him?

EDDY Never mind why, you get him.

WRIGHT Don't be rude to the lady, Eddy. (EDDY WHIRLS ON HIM)

EDDY You! What are you doing here?

WRIGHT Passing the time away. D'you mind taking your hand out of your coat pocket.

EDDY I'll keep it there if I want t'.

WRIGHT That would be a change for you. As a rule you have it in someone's else's pocket. (EDDY TAKES A STEP) Now, no violence. Take me to court and have me up for defamation of character. It'd be safer. In the meantime, do what I said. Take your hand out of your pocket. (EDDY DOES SO RELUCTANTLY. WRIGHT COMES TO HIM) Now tell me how you got out of hospital and where you got the gun?

EDDY What gun? (WRIGHT SLAPS EDDY'S RIGHT COAT POCKET)

WRIGHT This one. (REACHES OVER QUICKLY AND TAKES GUN FROM POCKET) I would be interested to know.

ESMA REGARDS THE REVOLVED WITH HORROR.

EDDY Can't I carry a gun to protect myself if I want to?

WRIGHT Got a license for it?

EDDY (GRUMBLING) Not with me. It's at home.

WRIGHT Mr. Elder has a car out there. When he uses it he carries his license with him. Sorry, Quilton, but I'll have to take this gun. Produce your license and I'll return it to you. Purely a matter of form, you understand?

EDDY (SAVAGELY) Yeah. Purely a matter of form.

WRIGHT You might live to thank me for it, Eddy. How about coming back to the hospital with me?

EDDY (FEELING HIS ARM) They let me go. Me arm ain't that bad.

WRIGHT All internal injuries, uh? Psychological reactions.

ESMA (COMES TO R. OF WRIGHT) Sergeant! He meant to kill my husband.

WRIGHT Oh, what a cheerful lot of people we are tonight.

EDDY I'd hardly want to kill a man for makin' me fall of a horse.

ESMA I was thinking of last January when your Freda was found out by the Cross Roads. You blamed Jerome for that.

EDDY (PASSIONATELY) Yeah, and maybe I wasn't so far out, neither. They never got no one else for it and Freda was my daughter, don't forget.

WRIGHT Eddy, shut up. You haven't any proof about Freda. Just because you thought it was Jerome. You can't accuse a man without evidence.

EDDY Evidence. You men and the Law. Well, damn the Law. It isn't always right.

WRIGHT If you don't shut up, I'll shut you up.

EDDY (FURIOUS) You can shut me up. I know you can. You can stop me from talkin'...but you can't stop me from thinkin'.

ESMA You are wrong, Mr. Quilton.

EDDY I'm right, I tell y' an' you'd better watch yourself, too, Mrs. Keddle (LOUDLY) You're not so safe.

ESMA SHRINKS FROM HIM.

WRIGHT (SHARPLY) Eddy. (EDDY STOPS) You'd better change your mind about wanting to see Jerome.

EDDY All right, I'll change itfor the time bein'.

WRIGHT Good. I'm going your way into town. Care to come along with me?

EDDY GLARES AT HIM FOR A MOMENT THEN TURNS AND EXITS C.B. ABRUPTLY.

Good night, Mrs. Keddle.

ESMA Good night, Sergeant. And thank you. I'm glad you were here.

WRIGHT EXITS C.B. PULLING DOOR TO AFTER HIM. ESMA CLOSES IT FROM INSIDE THEN TURNS AND LEANS ON IT TREMBLING. JEROME ENTERS FROM PASSAGE BEHIND STAIRS.

JEROME (FRETFUL) Where is Sergeant Wright? I want Sergeant Wright (CROSSING TOWARDS L.)

ESMA He has gone, Jerome (COMES RLC.)

JEROME He should not have gone. He should have stayed and protected me. (CRISBY ENTERS L. AND GOES TO DESK) One of these people might try to kill me and the Sergeant is not here to protect me.... (AD LIB. ESMA COMES DOWN R. AS THOUGH TO EXIT. JEROME STOPS L.C. CRISBY ENTERS L. AND GOES TO DESK) Crisby, what.....?

CRISBY I can't stop now, Uncle. Mr. Strom is showing me some work.

JEROME But Crisby, I want to speak to you....

CRISBY You'll have to wait (ESMA STOPS AT CRISBY'S TONE)

JEROME (FURIOUS) You'll stay here and listen to me.

CRISBY Get out of my way (STEPS FORWARD)

JEROME Stay here, I say. Stay here. (HE STRIKES CRISBY SAVAGELY WITH THE STICK IN HIS HAND AND CRISBY CRIES OUT AND STAGGERS BACK. HE RECOVERS BUT IS SHAKING)

CRISBY You mad devil. (HE IS ABOUT TO ATTACK JEROME)

ESMA (HORRIFIED AND DIVINING HIS INTENTION) Crisby, don't. Don't!

CRISBY STOPS AND GLARES AT JEROME WHO IS UNAWARE OF HIS OWN NARROW ESCAPE.

JEROME You defy me? You....you young dog? (CRISBY IS TRYING TO CONTROL HIS VOICE. HE IS ALMOST CRYING WITH PENT UP RAGE)

CRISBY I hate you, Uncle Jerome. I'll kill you one of these days.

JEROME (ASTOUNDED) You'd.....you'd....?

MRS. MAX. (OFF STAGE ON STAIRS) It's getting late. I MUST go now.

THE SCENE BREAKS UP AND CRISBY EXITS QUICKLY AT L. MRS. MAXWELL ENTERS WITH ENID ON HER L. ESMA IS BY THE STAIRS. ENID NOTICES THE STRAINED ATMOSPHERE AND STOPS ON LAST STEP BUT MRS. MAXWELL COMES INNOCENTLY FORWARD TO TABLE FOR HER HAT.

It gets so very dark on these country roads. One never knows what might not happen in the shadows.

ENID Jim is getting his hat and coat. He won't be a moment.

ENID CROSSES TOWARDS TABLE DOWN L. FOR HER PURSE.

MRS. MAX. You don't mind my rushing away like this, do you?

ESMA (DULLY) Of course not.

JEROME IS AT C. WATCHING ENID. HE IS NOW QUITE MAD. MRS. MAXWELL SITS AT TABLE R.C. PUTTING ON HER HAT IN HER USUAL FLUSTERED MANNER. ENID TURNS TO FIND JEROME WATCHING HER.

JEROME Stop (ENID STOPS, SURPRISED. EVERYONE LOOKS)

ENID What's the matter, Mr.Keddle? (SHE AND MRS.MAXWELL ARE SCARED)

JEROME What did you take off that table?

ENID Why, only my purse.

JEROME (TO MRS. MAXWELL) Is that true?

MRS. MAX. Ye-es. Yes.

JEROME I'm not so sure.

ENID (INDIGNANT) That is my purse, Mr.Keddle (SHE SHOWS IT)

JEROME Yes, but what did you put in it?

ENID Mr.Keddle.

ESMA BEHIND TABLE R.C. LOOKS DOWN AT THE KNIFE USED TO CUT UP THE CAKE.

JEROME You have taken some of my money. You can look as innocent as you please. I know. I know. Let me see that purse.

ENID (OUTRAGED BACKS AWAY L.) No.

JEROME Give it to me. Give it to me.

MRS. MAXWELL SCREAMS. ESMA, HARDLY KNOWING WHAT SHE DOES? TAKES UP THE CAKE KNIFE.

ENID (FRANTIC) Leave me alone. Let me GO. (JEROME GRASPS HER. JIM ENTERS DOWNSTAIRS QUICKLY NOT EXPECTING TO FIND A DISTURBANCE)

ENID Jim!

JIM STOPS IN ASTONISHMENT. ESMA LOOKS AT KNIFE? REALISES WHAT SHE MIGHT HAVE DONE AND DROPS IT BACK ONTO THE TABLE THEN GOES U.S. MRS. MAXWELL LOOKS AT THE KNIFE IN FROZEN HORROR. JIM TAKES A QUICK STEP BUT ENID BREAKS FROM JEROME AND CROSSING HIM RUNS TO JIM AT R.

JIM (TO JEROME) Have you forgotten what I said, you swine?

ENID (HYSTERICALLY) Jim. It's not worth it. He's out of his mind. You can't reason with him.

JIM I've a damn good mind to batter some sense into him.

ENID (PREVENTING HIM ADVANCING) No.

JEROME (GOING TO RIGHT THROUGH C.) I can see I will have to lock the door of my room tonight. (HE EXITS BEHIND STAIRS CHUCKLING ALL WATCHING HIM GO. A PAUSE.)

ENID Jim. Must you leave the house?

JIM I've promised to drive Mrs. Maxwell home.

ENID Oh Jim, hurry back, won't you? This place is full of horror. I feel something dreadful is going to happen in it. I hate it. I wish we had not come.

JIM I'm sorry I've got to leave at all. Is there a key to your room? (HIS ARM IS AROUND HER)

ENID (PRODUCES KEY) Yes. I have it here.

JIM Good. Then you must lock it and don't open the door to anyone before I get back.

ENID I won't.

JIM I'd go crazy if anything happened to you. But nothing will happen. It won't take long to go into town and back in the car. Mrs. Keddle, you won't lock the door before I get back, will you?

ESMA (L.C.) If you don't mind Mr. Elder I'll lock this door. There is a side door which leads you through into here.

JIM May I see it? (LOOKING OFF L.)

ESMA It gives access to that hall which runs in here past Crisby's room on one side and the kitchen on the other. I'll leave it on the latch and you can come through.

JIM I would be disturbing Crisby.

ESMA Oh no. He and Mr. Strom will be working for some time yet.

JIM Thank you. Are you ready, Mrs. Maxwell?

MRS. MAX. (HURRIES TO HIM) Ready? I'm over anxious. Good-night Mrs. Keddle?

ESMA Good night, Mrs. Maxwell. (WRYLY) So good of you to come.

MRS. MAX. Yes. No. I mean...good night.

JIM HOLDS DOOR OPEN AS MRS. MAXWELL EXITS. JIM GLANCES AT ENID THEN EXITS C.B. ESMA LOCKS THE DOOR AS ENID GOES DOWN R.

ENID I think I'll go up to my room again. Good night.

ESMA Goodnight, Mrs.Elder. I'm sorry this has happened. Jerome has never been like this before. Never like this. I don't understand. I'm so sorry it should have been the night you arrived.

ENID You have been very good. The supper and the flowers in my room.

ESMA (WISTFULLY) You noticed the flowers?

ENID Of course I did. Good night.

ESMA Good night, Mrs.Elder.

ENID EXITS UPSTAIRS. ESMA COMES TO FOOT OF STAIRS AND LOOKS UP AFTER HER, THINKING, COMPARING. JEROME ENTERS FROM PASSAGE BEHIND STAIRS. HE HAS A BAG OF COINS.

JEROME (LOOKING ABOUT) Where are they all?

ESMA Mrs.Elder has gone to her room. Mr.Elder and Mrs.Maxwell have gone into town.

JEROME Are they coming back?

ESMA Mr.Elder will be back shortly.

JEROME Where is Crisby?

ESMA He is in his room with Mr.Strom, studying.

JEROME I have a lot to say to Crisby in the morning. Have you locked the door? (TRIES THE DOOR C.B.)

ESMA Yes.

JEROME But you said the man would be back.

ESMA The side door is on the latch so that Mr.Elder can get in.

JEROME What? The door on the latch? Why, anything could happen. Anything.

ESMA I told him to lock it after him.

JEROME Anything could happen.

ESMA (HER NERVES BREAKING) Oh, for God's sake stop this eternal mumbling of suspicion. Go to your room and lock yourself in if you are so frightened.

SHE EXITS HURRIEDLY SHE GOES TO STAIRS, STOPS AS THOUGH REMEMBERING THEN EXITS BEHIND STAIRS, NOT UPSTAIRS.

JEROME Presently, presently.

HE LOOKS TO SEE SHE HAS GONE THEN GOES TO PASSAGE AND BRINGS OUT A HURRICANE OR STORM LAMP. BRINGS THIS TO TABLE R.C. AND LIGHTS IT. HE CARRIES IT TO R. TO LIGHT SWITCH AND PUTS OUT LIGHT. ALL IS DARK SAVE FOR THE LAMP TURNED LOW. HE GOES TO DOOR C.B. AND UNLOCKS IT. OPENS IT WIDE AND LISTENS. HE IS FEARFUL. HE CLUTCHES THE BAG OF COINS TO HIM. HE HEARS A NOISE DOWN L. ON STAGE.

JEROME Who's that? (LOOKS L. MOVES DOWN L. A FEW STEPS.)
Who's that? Answer me! (SHAKES THE LAMP. SHUDERS AND MOANS THEN TURNING SAYS:) Shadows.

SOMEONE RISES FROM BEHIND SETTEE AND STABS JEROME WITH KNIFE IN THE BACK. JEROME GASPS AND STAGGERS TO HIS KNEES. HE RISES AGAIN.

JEROME Oh, my back. My back (HE TURNS) Where are you? Hiding in the dark so I won't see you. Which one of them are you? Let me see you once. Just once. Ah! (EVIDENTLY HE SEES WHO IT IS BUT PERSON IS HIDDEN FROM AUDIENCE BY SETTEE) So it is you, then. (HE LAUGHS) I know. You want my gold. That is it. You want my gold.

JEROME (HOLDS THE LAMP HIGH) Don't let let them find that. Oh, I will die of this pain. (HE STAGGERS BACK THEN APPARENTLY GETS AN IDEA) If I die, send back my voice to haunt them. Send back my voice to tear apart their consciences. I see you, lurking there in the dark... (BACKING TOWARDS C.B.)....and I know you. If I die, my voice will haunt you. Always in your ears. The Voice of Jerome Keddle. I shall be your conscience. (AT THE DOOR NOW HE TURNS AND GOES OUT DROPPING COINS) Don't let them get my gold. (HE LAUGHS AND GOES OFF TO L. AND LAMP LIGHT SHOWS THROUGH SLATS OF L. SHUTTER.)Don't let them get my gold. (LAUGHTER AND MOANS AD LIB.)

THERE IS A BRIEF PAUSE. JEROME IS HEARD STUMBLING AWAY AND CALLING. A FIGURE DARTS TO THE DOOR, IS OUTLINED UNCERTAINLY THEN IS GONE. THERE IS THE SOUND OF RUNNING STEPS OFF L. OUTSIDE. JEROME'S VOICE IN DISTANCE BREAKS OFF IN MID SENTENCE AND SCREAMS. ENID'S VOICE IS HEARD TO SCREAM UPSTAIRS AT SAME TIME. FOOTSTEPS OFF RIGHT AND ENID COMES DOWNSTAIRS INTO HALL. SHE IS CRYING. SHE RUSHES DOWN AND ON THEN FUMBLES FOR LIGHT SWITCH. SHE FINDS IT AT LAST AND SWITCHES ON THE LIGHT. SHE IS BREATHING HYSTERICALLY. SHE TURNS TO THE DOOR C.B. JIM APPEARS IN IT AT THAT MOMENT, HIS BACK TO HER. HE IS LOOKING OFF L. HE TURNS IN DOORWAY AND SEES HER.

ENID (HORRIFIED) Jim. (MAKES STEP FORWARD. HE COMES TO HER AND TAKES HER INTO HIS ARMS. ENTER UP L. STROM AND CRISBY. CRISBY IS STILL IN DRESSING GOWN AND SLIPPERS AND CARRIES A PEN)

STROM What's the matter? What was that noise?

JIM (INDICATES DOOR C.B. WITH NOD OF HEAD) Go out and see. About fifty yards down the track towards the road.

STROM GIVES HIM A QUICK LOOK THEN EXITS C.B. CRISBY SITS SLOWLY AT DESK WATCHING JIM AND THE OPEN DOOR.

CRISBY (QUIETLY) What have you done?

ENID Jim. It's awful. I saw you from the window. I saw you.

JIM It wasn't me, Enid. It wasn't me, I tell you.

STROM REAPPEARS AND STANDS IN DOORWAY MOTIONLESS AS THOUGH HE HAS FORGOTTEN THEM. ESMA ENTERS QUICKLY FROM PASSAGE. SHE STOPS.

ESMA Dayne. What has happened? (CROSSES TO STROM) I heard Jerome screaming.

STROM (WATCHING HER CLOSELY) Jerome is dead. (THERE IS A PAUSE)

ESMA (FAINTLY) Dead.....Oh!

SHE CRUMPLES IN A HEAP AND STROM CATCHES HER AND LOWERS HER GENTLY. CRISBY JUMPS UP AND THE ELDERS TURN QUICKLY.

TABLEAU.

THE CURTAIN FALLS QUICKLY.

END OF ACT ONE

"The Voice of Jerome Keddle."
("Phillip Underwood"
Nom de plume of
Russell J.Cakes.)

(Approximately 45 minutes playing time).

"THE VOICE OF JEROME KEDDLE."

ACT TWO.

SCENE: THE SAME

TIME: AN HOUR LATER.

THE ONLY CHANGE IS THAT CHAIR AT R. OF TABLE R.C. HAS BEEN MOVED TO R. END OF SETTEE. CHAIR PREVIOUSLY L. OF TABLE NOW BEHIND IT. DOOR C.B. IS STANDING OPEN BUT NOTHING CAN BE SEEN SAVE A SUGGESTION OF BUSH IN THE DARKNESS.

DISCOVERED: CRISBY SITTING AT DESK, ARMS FOLDED ON HIS KNEES AND HEAD BURIED ON ARMS. HE REMAINS THIS POSITION RIGHT UP TILL THE TIME HE SPEAKS LATER IN THE ACT.

MRS. KEDDLE IS SEATED ON SETTEE LEANING ON R. END OF IT WITH HER HAND TO HER THROAT. ENID SITS ON L. OF ESMA CONSOLING HER NERVOUSLY. JIM STANDS BEHIND THE SETTEE NEAR ENID. STROM IS SITTING IN ARMCHAIR. ENID, JIM AND STROM ARE ALL WATCHING THE OPEN DOOR EXPECTANTLY.

SERGEANT WRIGHT'S HELMET IS ON THE TABLE, A CONSPICUOUS OBJECT.

AFTER CURTAIN RISE THERE IS A PAUSE, THEN:

JIM He's coming.

ENTER C.B. SERGEANT WRIGHT. HE CARRIES A FLASHLIGHT AND A KNIFE WHICH IS HELD IN NEWSPAPER. HE COMES STRAIGHT DOWN TO TABLE R.C. AND DROPS FIRST THE PAPER THEN THE KNIFE ON THE TABLE. HIS FACETIOUS MANNER, EVIDENT IN ACT ONE, IS ENTIRELY GONE.

WRIGHT: There's the think that did it. Anyone recognise it? (THEY ALL SHRINK FROM IT) Oh, it's all right. I've cleaned it and there wasn't a finger print. The murderer saw to that. (PUTS FLASHLIGHT ON TABLE)

ESMA(That knife belonged to Jerome.

WRIGHT: (C) Oh it did, did it?

ESMA It was his fishing knife. He kept it in the work shed at the side of the house....on a bench.

WRIGHT (PLAYING WITH THE KNIFE) Was the shed locked?

ESMA No. The lock was broken some time ago. Jerome burst open the door to get in.

WRIGHT Does that mean it was locked from the inside?

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT SITS AGAINST TABLE PLAYING WITH KNIFE AND WATCHING THEIR REACTIONS. HE MAKES A STABBING MOTION WITH IT.

WRIGHT Why was it locked on the inside....and why had Jerome to burst open the door instead of being let in quietly?

ESMA He had threatened me and I locked myself in the shed.

WRIGHT He had threatened you. Why?

THE QUESTIONS ARE PUT KINDLY ENOUGH AT PRESENT AND MRS. KEDDLE IS ANSWERING HONESTLY THOUGH CAREFULLY. AS THE NIGHT GOES ON THE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN THESE TWO GROWS UNTIL THE THIRD ACT WHEN SHE OPPOSES HIM.

ESMA He was suspicious of me. Oh, you can't imagine the wicked thoughts that passed through his mind at times. He was mad. Oh, you know that, Sergeant.

WRIGHT I am sorry to do this. Mrs. Keddle. but you understand I must. I want to find the responsible person.

JIM: You think it was one of us?

WRIGHT I wouldn't go that far, Mr. Elder, but I must work on what I knew, mustn't I? As to motive, I could accuse almost anyone in this room. If the guilty person is present, then I'll find him....er her. Those who are innocent will know they are innocent so I call on them to help me. Mr. Elder (HE GOES TO ELDER STILL PLAYING WITH THE KNIFE) I know that you threatened to kill Jerome Keddle, didn't you?

JIM Oh, that's....(HE STOPS)

WRIGHT You uttered a threat, didn't you?

ELDER Oh...yes. I did threaten him.

ENID Oh, Jim....

WRIGHT Very well. What did you say to Keddle?

STROM(Sergeant. What right have you to ask these questions?

WRIGHT Every right because I'm after a murderer. How I find him doesn't concern you. I've got a few questions to ask you, too, Strom.

STROM You have nothing against me.

WRIGHT You were here when it happened. Now, Mr. Elder, please. What did you say to Keddle?

JIM I said that if he dared to lift a finger against my wife again, I'd kill him.

WRIGHT And did he? (A PAUSE)

ENID Oh, tell him everything, Jim. Holding it back won't help.

JIM: I know. Yes, he did.

WRIGHT But you did nothing about it?

JIM No.

ENID' Sergeant. Jim didn't mean what he said to Jerome Keddle.

WRIGHT Was anyone present when you made this threat?

JIM Mrs. Keddle....and Crisby were here the first time. Then, the second time after you had gone, Mrs. Maxwell was here too.

WRIGHT Oh, of course. Mrs. Maxwell.

STROM (DRYLY) I don't think she did it, Sergeant.

WRIGHT Neither do I, Mr. Strom, but she may have some interesting information. (GOES TO DOOR C.B. AND CALLS OFF LL.) Trepner Gordon!

GORDON (APPEARING AT DOOR C.B.) Hâte, Sergeant.

WRIGHT You know where Mrs. Maxwell lives?

GORDON Yes.

WRIGHT Drive over and get her. Don't tell her what's happened but bring her here as fast as you can.

GORDON Right.

WRIGHT Oh, Gordon. Where's Keddle now?

GORDON Franks and I carried him into the bench before Franks left for town.

WRIGHT Good. And another thing. I want Eddy Quilton, too.

GORDON Eddy Quilton, too, eh? Right. Oh, Sergeant. Mind if I wash my hands before I go? I've got....(NODS OUT DOOR C.B.)

WRIGHT (HURRIEDLY) All right. All right. I know you have. Mrs.Keddle, a tap?

ESMA In the kitchen off the right of the hall, in there.

(INDICATES OFF L. GORDON GOES OFF UP L. WRIGHT COMES DOWN TO R. OF SETTEE)

WRIGHT Mrs.Keddle, where were you when this happened?

ESMA In my room upstairs.

(ENID AND JIM BOTH GLANCE AT HER. WRIGHT NOTICES THIS AND IS SUSPICIOUS)

WRIGHT How did you come to know about it?

ESMA I heard Jerome's voice down here talking to someone in...in a very emotional manner.

WRIGHT What was he saying?

ESMA I could not hear that but he opened this door and went out. He was yelling about his gold, then. His voice broke off and he screamed. At the same time a woman's voice screamed too. (THEY LOOK AT ENID)

ENID Yes. I screamed.

ESMA I came downstairs at once and found Mr. and Mrs.Elder in here and Mr.Strom at the door. He told me Jerome was dead... and...I fainted.

WRIGHT You fainted.

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT A woman like you, fainting.

ESMA The...the shock...and I had been nervous all night.

WRIGHT What had made you nervous all night?

ESMA (RISES) You know as well as I do.

WRIGHT Do I?

ESMA Yes. Who have you sent for in addition to Mrs.Maxwell.

WRIGHT: Oooooh! (ESMA GOES TO CHAIR BEHIND TABLE) Mrs.Elder, you were the woman who screamed, of course.

ENID Of course.

WRIGHT Why?

ENID I was in my room which is directly above this and next to Mrs. Keddle's. I heard Mr.Keddle, too. I opened my window and I heard the sound of a blow and Mr.Keddle broke off with a horrible cry (SHE SHIVERS) I came running downstairs and in here and...must I go on?

JIM Enid, you said we must hold nothing back. (STEPS TO R. END OF SETTEE) She came in here and saw me standing in the doorway.

WRIGHT Going out.

JIM Coming in.

WRIGHT Ha! Awkward for you, Mr.Elder.

JIM I didn't do it, Sergeant. I swear I didn't.

WRIGHT How did you happen to be out there at such an awkward moment?

JIM I was coming back from seeing Mrs. Maxwell home. The bush seemed to make it very dark. Mrs. Keddle told me to come in at the side door because this one would be locked.

WRIGHT (TO ESMA) Correct?

ESMA (WATCHING JIM INTENTLY) Yes.

JIM As I came towards the house I heard Jerome yelling. Then his voice was cut off and I heard a thump as though he had fallen. He was carrying a lamp and I saw it fall. Then someone ran past me towards the road. (ESMA SITS BEHIND TABLE R.C.)

WRIGHT. Oh, a man?

JIM Yes. I saw his face for a moment in the glare of the headlights.

WRIGHT You knew him?

WRIGHT

JIM We don't know any people here, yet, but I'd know him if I saw him again.

WRIGHT And this man ran past you making for the main road?

JIM Yes.

WRIGHT Why didn't you try to stop him?

JIM I didn't know what had happened. I got out and stumbled over Jerome. Then the light went on in here and I could see what had happened. The front door was wide open so I came in by it instead of going around. That's how Enid came to see me standing in the doorway coming in.

WRIGHT It's a pity no one saw you outside, Mr. Elder.

JIM I know. That other man saw me as he ran past.

WRIGHT If your story is true then that other man must have been the murderer.

JIM(I expect so.

WRIGHT In which case he is not going to give evidence to clear you and incriminate himself.

JIM I realize that. (HE SITS BESIDE ENID TO R. OF HER)

WRIGHT Did anyone of you hear Mr. Elder return in the car?

ESMA Oh yes.

ENID I did.

STROM Yes, I did.

WRIGHT Anyone notice just when it stopped? Whether it was before or after Jerome screamed? (SILENCE) That's too bad.

ESMA I thought I heard the car afterwards.

WRIGHT Yes. It could have been left out there with the engine running to make you think it had not stopped.

GORDON ENTERS UP L.

GORDON Sergeant. (WRIGHT GOES UP AND GORDON HANDS HIM BOTTLE. WRIGHT UNCORKS IT AND TASTES IT. CONCEALING IT FROM OTHERS. GORDON SAYS SOMETHING TO HIM AND WRIGHT IS STARTLED.

WRIGHT Where did you get this?

GORDON It was on the kitchen sink. (WRIGHT POKETS IT)

WRIGHT Right, Gordon. Drive like the devil.

GORDON I will. (EXITS C.B.)

WRIGHT (TO R. END OF SETTEE) Mr. Elder, what happened after your wife found you standing in the doorway?

JIM Someone else came in.

WRIGHT Where from?

JIM Strom and Crisby from that door (POINT TO L.) I told Strom to go out and look and he went. After awhile he came back. Then Mrs. Keddle came in....

WRIGHT From where? (GENTLY)

JIM From there. (POINTS TO PASSAGE AND ESMA STARTS)
When Mr. Strom told her, she fainted.

WRIGHT Any particular reason why you hadn't gone home, Mr. Strom?

STROM I was helping Crisby with his studies.

WRIGHT In his room?

STROM Yes. His room is on the ground floor and the window faces the front of the house. The door opens onto the hall in there. (POINTS OFF L.) and the hall leads to the side door of the house.

WRIGHT And the side door was on the latch?

STROM Yes.

WRIGHT How do you know?

STROM I don't. I'm only going by what Mr. Elder said a moment ago.

WRIGHT (Mrs. Keddle, you did leave that door on the latch?

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT And when you heard the disturbance I suppose you were very upset.

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT You must have guessed that the screamer was Mrs. Elder in the next room. Therefore you would have been very agitated and would have hurried down to see what had happened.

ESMA I told you I did.

WRIGHT How is your room placed?

ESMA Mrs. Elder's is immediately above this. Mine is the next room that way. (INDICATES R.) and the staircase is directly opposite my door.

WRIGHT Directly opposite.....Mrs. Elder, did you see Mrs. Keddle on the stairs?

ENID Why, no, but I was very agitated and it was dark. She may have been close behind me.

WRIGHT So. (TURNS TO ESMA) You heard Mrs. Elder scream, you flew to your door and rushed straight out and down the stairs.....

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT And into this room.

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT And it took you nearly five minutes to get that short distance?

ESMA Five minutes? No...what are you talking about?

WRIGHT You heard Mrs.Elder scream in the room next to yours. She rushed down here at once and so did you. She had a few yards further to come yet she did not see you on the way and you did not get into this room until almost five minutes after she did. I hope you didn't faint on the way down, too, Mrs.Keddle.

ESMA I stood at the top of the stairs. I was afraid to come down. Somehow, I knew what had happened and it terrified me.

WRIGHT But finally you overcame your fear and came down.

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT Yet you were seen entering this room from that passage. (POINTS TO PASSAGE BEHIND STAIRS) And so, Mrs.Keddle, your husband will never enter any institute. (SHE STARTS) You see, I didn't misinterpret what you said. You wanted to kill your husband, didn't you, Mrs.Keddle? (HE TAKES BOTTLE OUT)

ESMA No, it's not true.

WRIGHT What about this?

HE PUTS BOTTLE ON TABLE BEFORE HER. SHE LOOKS AT IT QUITE UNALARMED.
Don't you know what it is?

ESMA No?

WRIGHT It's strychnine. (ESMA IS HORRIFIED THIS TIME)
Trooper Gordon found it on the drain board of your kitchen. (SENSATION)
Mrs.Keddle, you meant to poison Jerome and you would pick that ghastly stuff.

ESMA It's not true, I tell you.

WRIGHT You deserve jail for thinking of it. Do you know what it does to a man?

ESMA' I don't want to know. (SHE COVERS HER FACE)

WRIGHT It doesn't only kill him, it sends him through hell alive first. Imagine yourself with cramp in every tiny muscle of your body. I've seen a man with his back arched, balancing on his heels and the back of his head and you could have crawled under him. His face was horrible. Every organ of his body was gripped...like that (CLOSING HIS FIST) But he was still alive...and that's what you were going to do to your husband.

ESMA It's not true. I don't know where it came from (SOBBING)

WRIGHT That's a lie.

STROM (RISING) It's not a lie. She doesn't know anything about it. I brought it here.

THERE IS A PAUSE. WRIGHT CROSSES TO STROM.

WRIGHT You brought it here.

STROM Yes.

WRIGHT For a purpose.

STROM Yes. I intended to kill Jerome Keddle. I admit it...freely. Can You blame me for wanting to get her away from this hell of a place? (GOES TO ESMA PROTECTINGLY) Making people happy isn't a crime. I love Esma Keddle...(FURIOUSLY) ...and I'm not afraid to tell you all....and I'm glad he's dead. You hear that Sergeant? I'M GLAD HE'S DEAD (QUIETLY) but I'm not guilty.

CRISBY (LOOKS UP AND SPEAKS FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE CURTAIN RISE) The knife was quicker and better. We didn't want him tortured we only wanted him dead.

WRIGHT Oh, you wanted him dead, too, did you? I suppose you'd already made up your mind to do it, too.

CRISBY Yes, I had.

WRIGHT (AT C. TURNS) It strikes me, I'm the only one who hadn't decided to kill him, so, according to the best fiction, I'm the guilty person. You all wanted to kill him and you had all practically made up your minds to do it. Then why don't one of you confess and get the thing settled? You can draw lots to see who confesses, if you like.

CRISBY (STILL IN A TRANCE LIKE TONE) Why don't you tell the Sergeant everything.

WRIGHT Everything? Then something's being held back by all of you?

CRISBY Yes.

WRIGHT What is it?

ENID It was nothing. Nothing worth...(SHE STOPS)

CRISBY Tell him.

WRIGHT Come on, what is it?....Crisby?

CRISBY They know as well as I do. Make them tell.

JIM (RISES SUDDENLY) Very well I will.

STROM (QUICKLY) Elder!

JIM Oh, I'm not afraid of any ghost.

PAUSE. WRIGHT COMES DOWN C. HANDS ON HIPS IN AN ENQUIRING ATTITUDE.

WRIGHT How interesting.

ESMA (QUIETLY) Please, Mr. Elder.

JIM He's got to know, Mrs. Keddle. Sergeant. After Jerome was murdered to-night, something happened, something else that no one's told you about, because they are all scared... they're scared. (LOOKS AROUND AT THEM)

WRIGHT Well, what is it?

JIM Sergeant. Is Jerome Keddle dead?

WRIGHT (ASTONISHED) Is he....dead?

JIM Yes. (PAUSE. THEN:)

WRIGHT As dead as Caesar.

JIM You aren't saying he's dead just to frighten us?

WRIGHT Good Lord, no. You saw him yourself with the knife driven in his back.

JIM I know, but it can't be so.

WRIGHT He's out there lying on his work bench and you can take it from me, he's a corpse if ever there was one.

JIM Can you tell how long he has been dead?

WRIGHT He was struck twice with that knife. (INDICATING IT) The first time was not fatal. He staggered outside and his murderer followed. A second blow was struck out there and it killed him instantly.

JIM Instantly?

WRIGHT Yes.

JIM You are sure of that

WRIGHT Positive. Why?

JIM Because about an hour after he was murdered and we were waiting in here for you, we....we heard his Voice.

WRIGHT I don't follow you.

JIM I tell you, we heard his Voice. He was out there in the bush where he was killed and he was yelling: "Don't let them get my gold. Don't let them get my gold."

WRIGHT (ANGRILY) Ah, what rubbish.

ENID (CRYING) But it's true, it's true. We heard him. All of us.

PAUSE IN WHICH ENID CONTROLS HER SOBBING.

CRISBY He told us he'd do it. He told us he'd send back his voice to haunt us.

WRIGHT (LOOKS AT CRISBY THEN TO OTHERS) I don't know what you people have heard out there but you can't make me believe it was Jerome. People don't come back.

CRISBY How do you know? You all powerful, all knowing demi-god with three stripes on your sleeves?

WRIGHT That's enough, Crisby. I said these things don't happen.

ENID Oh! What's that?

ALL STOP AND LISTEN. IT IS THE CAR RETURNING. IT STOPS OFF.

WRIGHT It's the car returning with several interesting exhibits.

A KNOCK ON DOOR C.B. SERGEANT TURNS AND OPENS IT.

MRS. MAX. (OFF PROTESTING) It's preposterous. More, it's perfectly scandalous....(AD LIB.)

SHE ENTERS FOLLOWED BY QUILTON AND GORDON. GORDON HAS REVOLVER PRESSED AGAINST QUILTON'S BACK. QUILTON AND GORDON GO TO R.C. GORDON FIRST CLOSING THE DOOR. MRS. MAXWELL ON L. OF WRIGHT.

MRS. M.dragging a respectable woman out of her bed at one o'clock in the morning. If you'd only say why you want me and let me go. Sergeant (TURNS TO HIM) Why...I mean, why in the world have I been subjected to...to...

SHE STOPS. QUILTON TURNS TOWARDS L. AND HE AND JIM SEE ONE ANOTHER'S FACES. THEY RECOGNISE EACH OTHER. QUILTON GRAPPLES WITH GORDON.

EDDY Let me out of here. It's a trap.

HE BREAKS FREE AND JUMPS FOR DOOR THRUSTING GORDON FROM HIM BUT WRIGHT IS THERE FIRST. MRS. MAXWELL SCREAMS AND BACKS TO A CORNER D.S. ESMA RISES AND BACKS DOWN R. WRIGHT HOOKS HIS ARM UNDER QUILTON'S CHIN AND WITH A QUICK HEAVE SENDS HIM SPRAWLING TO THE FLOOR DOWN TOWARDS R.C. WRIGHT STANDS AT C. WITH REVOLVER DRAWN. GORDON HAS RECOGNIZED AND STANDS UP R. WITH REVOLVER READY.

WRIGHT You're staying here for awhile, Eddy.

JIM Why, that's the man I saw outside the house when I came back in the car.

WRIGHT I thought it might be.

ESMA Sergeant. What did I tell you? What did I tell you, to-night?

MRS. MAX. Oh, this is dreadful. Why have I been dragged into all this? What is it? What has happened?

WRIGHT (WATCHING EDDY WHO IS STILL ON FLOOR) Don't you know, Mrs. Maxwell?

MRS. MAX. No, no. Of course not. How should I?

WRIGHT Something has happened, Mrs. Maxwell, and if you look around, you'll see who's missing.

MRS. MAX. (DOES SO) Jerome.

WRIGHT Yes.

MRS. M. But where is he?...where? (SHE REALIZES THE TRUTH) Oh.....OH!

WRIGHT Yes. Jerome Kettle was killed tonight...by someone in this room.

MRS. M. (LOOKS AROUND SLOWLY AT ALL THEN COMES TO HIS L.)

O, Sergeant. I didn't do it. I went straight home from here. I can prove it. I can produce witnesses.

WRIGHT I'm not accusing you, Mrs. Maxwell. I had you brought here to answer a few questions. Now listen, Quilton, if you attempt to get away I'll take it as an admission that you murdered Jerome. Got that? And that goes foreveryone. You're all honor bound to stay in this house until I find the right person.

EDDY You can't force us to stay.

WRIGHT Can't I? You try it and see if I do shoot or not. I want this room cleared so I can talk to you all separately. Quilton, get up, but stay in here...and you, too, Mrs. Maxwell.

MRS. M. Yes, Sergeant.

WRIGHT You others can go but remember what I said about leaving the house.

CRISBY EXITS UP L. FOLLOWED BY STROM. ENID AND JIM GONGROSS AND OFF UPSTAIRS. MRS. KEDDLE GOES OFF DOWN PASSAGE BEHIND STAIRS.

You can put your gun away, Gordon.

GORDON DOES SO.

MRS. M. May I sit down, Sergeant?

WRIGHT Yes.

MRS. MAXWELL FUSSES AROUND SETTEE AND SITS IN R. HAND CORNER OF IT.

You can sit down too, Quilton, Sit here.

HE INDICATES CHAIR OF R. END OF SETTEE. QUILTON COMES TO IT AND SITS AND MRS. MAXWELL HASTILY RISES AND MOVES ALONG TO L. END OF SETTEE AWAY FROM HIM. GORDON COMES DOWN AT R.

WRIGHT Now, then, Eddy, what were you doing outside this door at the time Jerome was murdered?

EDDY I didn't kill him.

WRIGHT I asked you a question

EDDY You won't believe me if I tell y'.

WRIGHT Don't tell me you came with the intention of killing him, too, but found that someone had got in before you, or I will be annoyed. (HE PUTS REVOLVER AWAY)

EDDY I didn't come to kill him. I only wanted to see him an'.... an' pay 'im out for frightenin' my horse.

WRIGHT Sure it wasn't to pay him out about your daughter, Freda?

EDDY No. No. I swear it.

WRIGHT Then why did you bring that gun earlier in the evening?

EDDY All right. I was going to kill him. Does that satisfy you? I was going to kill him.

WRIGHT Let me see. This makes four.

GORDON Four what?

WRIGHT Let it go. Well, Eddy, what happened outside that door, according to your version?

EDDY I was comin' through the bush towards the house...

WRIGHTWithout any evil intention...Go on

EDDY I stepped into the track and the door opened. Jerome came out, screamin' somethin' terrible and staggered past me down the track. I couldn't see nothin' much. I heard Jerome scream and drop his lamp. I had to pass him to get down the path and as I did I could see him dinly with a knife stickin' in 'is back. I ran like 'ell and passed someone comin' up in a car.

WRIGHT Who was that coming up in the car?

EDDY It was the man that said he saw me.

WRIGHT Jim Elder.

EDDY I dunno his name. I've never seen him before.

WRIGHT You said the car was moving. Coming up the path?

EDDY No, it was standin' still but the engine was runnin'. 'E might have been makin' a get away.

WRIGHT You wuldn't be trying to push the blame on him, by any chance?

EDDY No, NO.

WRIGHT I shouldn't think you would but you seem to have been too close to that crime for comfort.

EDDY I didn't do it.

WRIGHT Mrs. Maxwell, did anything happen hereto your knowledge, after I left.

MRS. M. Oh no, Sergeant. No. Nothing at all. Er...Mr. Elder and Mr. Keddle had a quarrel.

WRIGHT Oh, is that all?

MRS. MAX. Just a tiddy one.

- WRIGHT(What did they say to one another? Not that it's very important but I'd like to know even the tiddy things that happened.
- MRS. MAX. Well, Mrs.Elder was THERE and she picked up her purse from the table, THERE. You see, I was sitting HERE (SHE GOES TO HER POSITION) and I could see it all.
- WRIGHT Yes, of course.
- MRS. MAX. Jerome was standing THERE and he thought Mrs.Elder had Taken something belonging to him and put it into her purse and he demanded to have it back. Mrs.Elder refused to let him see her purse and he tried to take it from her. Then Mr.Elder came in THERE down the stairs and saw them THERE. I'm not sure whether they were behind the settee or in front of it. BEHIND it, I THINK.
- WRIGHT I see. But they were somewhere over THERE.
- MRS. MAX. Yes, Sergeant. They were over THERE somewhere. Most definitely. I'm quite clear on that point. One has to be so careful, hasn't one?
- WRIGHT Oh yes.
- MRS. MAX. And there was a knife on the table, THERE. (SHE POINTS AND SEES THE KNIFE TO HER HORROR) Oh. It's still there.
- WRIGHT Well, what about it?
- MRS.MAX. Mrs.Kedde snatched up the knife...liek this.... (SHE SNATCHES IT UP AND FLOURISHES IT MOST VIGOROUSLY UNDER WRIGHT'S NOSE. HE DRAWS AWAY HASTILY. GOOD HUMOUREDLY EXASPERATED) Then Mrs.Elder saw her husband THERE and cried out: Jim! (ILLUSTRATES HOW) Just like that. Jim!....and everybody stopped still.
- WRIGHT What did Mrs.Kedde do with the knife?
- MRS. MAX. Nothing. She dropped it back onto the table, like that. (SHOWS HOW) then went up to the door. Then, Mr.Elder, who was THERE, said in a harsh voice to Jerome, who was THERE, "Have you forgotten what I said, you hog?"
- WRIGHT (ASTOUNDED) Are you sure he said that?
- MRS. MAX. Quite sure.
- WRIGHT He called Jerome a hog?
- MRS. MAX. Yes....or did he? Perhaps it was...pig...or...or swine. Yes, I think it was swine.
- WRIGHT Ah, much more likely. And that was all.
- MRS. MAX. Oh, no. He said that he had a damn good mind...(TROOPERS ARE SCANDALISED) It's only what he said..I don't swear, myself. Yes, a damn good mind to batter some sense into him, then he went out, THERE. (POINTS TO PASSAGE)
- GORDON Doesn't sound too good, Sergeant.
- WRIGHT COMES DOWN L. BEFORE SETTEE. MRS. MAXWELL SITS BEHIND TABLE.
- WRIGHT Nothing about this affair sounds good. They all had reason to kill him excepting Mrs.Elder.
- MRS. MAX. (ANXIOUSLY) And me, Sergeant.
- WRIGHT And Mrs.Maxwell. Make a note of that, will you, Gordon.

WRIGHT Mrs. Elder and Mrs. Maxwell had no reason to kill Jerome...
(MRS. MAXWELL LOOKS WELL SATISFIED)...but they might have
done it. (MRS. MAXWELL IS INDIGNANT AGAIN) If there had
been five wounds instead of two I'd have said they took
it in turns to stab him. That includes you, Eddy.

EDDY I 'ad nothin' to do with it.

GORDON It might be safe to rule the women out, Serg.
Knife blows like that need a bit of muscle behind them.

WRIGHT The knife was sharp. Mrs. Keddle could have done it....
(THEN MOCKLY SERIOUS) and look at this. (HE LIFTS MRS.
MAXWELL'S ARM AND FEELS THE BICEPS SHE SQUEALS AND
SNATCHES HER ARM AWAY INDIGNANTLY. ESMA ENTERS BY
PASSAGE AND GOES UPSTAIRS) I thought she went upstairs
before?

GORDON No. She went down the passage behind the stairs.

WRIGHT That looked funny. Everything looks funny. The voice,
everything.

GORDON What Voice?

WRIGHT I don't know if it's a plot to complicate things for
me but they swear they've heard Keddle's voice since he
was killed.

MRS. MAX. His Voice! Lord protect us! His voice has come back.

WRIGHT Nonsense.

MRS. MAX. It must be that, Sergeant. Don't you remember him saying he
was impregnating the spot with his voice so that when he
died it would still be there and would frighten his murderer?

WRIGHT Mrs. Maxwell, don't be so superstitious.

MRS. MAX. We are all superstitious when we have reason to be.

ENTER STROM UP L. HE COMES DOWN TO BEHIND SETTEE BETWEEN WRIGHT AND
QUILTON.

STROM Sergeant Wright. I've got to see you.

WRIGHT Yes, Mr. Strom?

STROM I...there's something I would like to tell you. (HE STOPS.
A MOANING IN KEDDLE'S VOICE IS HEARD OFF IN THE DISTANCE)

EDDY (HOARSELY) What's that?

ALL STOP AND LISTEN

MRS. MAX. (TERRIFIED) Oh....

VOICE: OFF DISTANT Don't let them get my gold (MOANING)

MRS. MAX. It's Jerome Keddle. No - no, it's not. It's....HIS VOICE.

VOICE Don't let them get my gold.

STROM Oh, my God! (HE COVERS HIS FACE IN HIS HANDS)

WRIGHT IS ASTOUNDED BUT INCREDULOUS. GORDON IS EYING HIM IN AMAZEMENT AND
SOME APPREHENSION. THE VOICE CONTINUES AMID HORRID LAUGHTER:

VOICE: Don't let them get my gold.

STROM (TO WRIGHT) Now will you believe us?

THE SOBBING MOANS OFF DIE AWAY. WRIGHT GROSSES FOR FLASHLIGHT FROM TABLE THEN JUMPS TO DOOR AND THROWS IT OPEN. HE GOES OUT FLASHING LIGHT DOWN ROAD.

WRIGHT There's nothing out here.

MRS. MAX. (HYSTERICALLY IN A HIGH TERRIFYING VOICE) He's trying to SEE a Voice. (SHE LAUGHS) He's trying to SEE a Voice with a flashlight. (HYSTERIA AND LAUGHTER AD LIB. IT GRADUALLY QUIETENS TO A BREATHLESS GASPING STAMMER).

ESMA (HURRYING DOWNSTAIRS) What's the matter?

STROM The Voice is back.

ESMA Oh, they'll believe us, now.

WRIGHT RE ENTERS QUIETLY C.B. AND CLOSSES DOOR. HE IS PERPLEXED.

WRIGHT You'd better take Mrs. Maxwell upstairs, Mrs. Keddle. She'll be all right if you leave her ALONE for awhile. (PLACES FLASHLIGHT ON TABLE R.C.)

MRS. MAX. (MAKING A REMARKABLE RECOVERY) Alone? You daren't leave me alone. With that out there howling like a lost soul?

ESMA You can come up to Mrs. Elder. She'll keep you company.

SHE TAKES MRS. MAXWELL ACROSS AND UPSTAIRS. STROM AND QUILTON ARE STILL TERRIFIED.

EDDY Sergeant, I don't know what you think but I tell you, I'd know Jerome Keddle's voice anywhere.....and that was it.

WRIGHT (TO C.) Do you think so.

EDDY I'd swear to it.

WRIGHT Then Heaven help the person with a guilty conscience. Strom, what did you come in to tell me?

STROM I came in to tell you about the Voice...I wanted to try to convince you, but the Voice has done that for me.

WRIGHT Did you tell us the truth about that strychnine?

STROM Yes.

WRIGHT How did it come to be out there in Mrs. Keddle's kitchen?

STROM I...I brought it over tonight and left it there, accidentally.

WRIGHT You brought a bottle of deadly poison here and left it on the kitchen sink, accidentally?

STROM Yes.

WRIGHT That's as hard to swallow as the contents of that bottle. All right, you can go again. Eddy, you'd better get out for a while, too, but don't leave the house.

STROM GOES UP L. AND OFF

EDDY (RISING) D'ye think I'd leave it, now, that THAT outside?

HE GOES UP AND OFF UP L. AFTER STROM. WRIGHT COMES DOWN BEFORE SEPTER. SITS AND RUBS HIS HANDS OVER HIS EYES. SIGHS. GORDON IS SYMPATHETIC.

WRIGHT Gordon, we're up against something devilish. You heard that yelling, didn't you?

GORDON I heard it all right. It wasn't any hallucination.

WRIGHT And equally it wasn't Jerome Keddle. It just couldn't be. Jerome Keddle's dead. He's dead. He's dead. And so is his voice....or it ought to be. (GORDON SITS IN ARMCHAIR BY PASSAGE)
A voice calls for physical vocal chords...and dead men have no vocal chords.

GORDON Maybe we've struck the exception that proves the rule.

WRIGHT There's some explanation and it's got something to do with the murderer. Listen, Gordon, I'll take it from the beginning and we'll see what we can make of it.

GORDON Righto. Fire away. (PRODUCES NOTEBOOK AND PENCIL)

WRIGHT Jerome Keddle is mad. He hoards gold somewhere close to this house in the bush. To frighten people away he goes out there and yells like a dervisher. Now for clues. Item: Strom is in love with Mrs.Keddle.

GORDON Wild guess.

WRIGHT Your mistake. Strom told us himself. And being in love with her, he hates to think of her tied to this man.

GORDON Then claiming the strychnine may only have been a move to protect Mrs.Keddle?

WRIGHT Sounds like it.

GORDON Go on.

WRIGHT Item. Nephew Crisby also hates Jerome since he is the butt of Jerome's anger. Item: The Elders arrive and immediately Jerome gets into their bad books by troubling the Mrs. The Mr.Threatens to kill Jerome if he does it again, and he does it again. Item: Jerome frightens a horse which throws Quilton and Quilton comes here with a loaded revolver.

QUESTIONING GLANCE FROM GORDON. WRIGHT PRODUCES REVOLVER AND PUTS IT BESIDE HIM ON SETTEE

...demanding to see Jerome and settle with him. He is taken away by me, with a flea in his ear. Same night, Jerome is stabbed to death and both Elder and Quilton see each other on the spot at the time.

GORDON Alibis?

WRIGHT Elder's, poor. Quilton's, ditto.

GORDON Strom and Crisby?

WRIGHT Studyingin Crisby's room, off there, near side door, which was on the latch. Strom did leave Crisby for awhile. Said he wanted to take headache tablets in the kitchen. Could have hopped out kitchen window or gone out side door. Mrs.Elder's alibi, substantial. Mrs.Keddle's, not satisfactory. It took her five minutes to run downstairs into this room. In fact, Elder declares she didn't come downstairs at all but ran in from that passage.

GORDON Strom and Crisby could have collaborated.

WRIGHT That's quite possible. Exhibits: A, Revolver taken from Quilton's pocket. B, knife taken from Jerome's back, and C., strychnine taken from Mrs.Keddle's kitchen. STANDS BACK AND LOOKS AT THEM.
Aren't they pretty?

GORDON(Crisby was in a dressing gown and slippers.

WRIGHT Yes. He'd been in them all the evening.

GORDON And his slippers had clay on 'em.

WRIGHT What?

GORDON I said his slippers had clay on 'em. Didn't you notice... Sergeant?

WRIGHT (GOING L.) Damn. To think I missed a thing like that.

GORDON Perhaps he does the block several times before he turns in of a night.

WRIGHT And perhaps he doesn't; if Crisby did his block, then he murdered Jerome. That's the only block he's likely to do.

GORDON (CLICKS HIS FINGERS) Got an idea.

WRIGHT ~~Sak maktak.~~ What about?

GORDON The Voice.

WRIGHT What about the Voice?

GORDON Crisby IS related to Mrs.Keddle, isn't he?

WRIGHT She is his Aunt.

GORDON Then Jerome was...?

WRIGHT Crisby's mother's brother. That is, Crisby's direct Uncle.

GORDON That makes it very interesting.

WRIGHT Why?

GORDON Oh, I was just wondering whether the Voice ran in the family.

WRIGHT The Voice?

GORDON Don't you see? It could be Crisby. The nephew. Haven't you noticed the way he talks? Very like Jerome at times. It's common enough. A voice running in the family.

WRIGHT Wait a moment. You've got something there.

GORDON Didn't Eddy Quilton say he recognised it?

WRIGHT Hold on a moment. Now, who was in the room with us when we heard it, or better still, who wasn't in the room.

GORDON The Elders, Mrs.Keddle...and Crisby.

WRIGHT It couldn't have been either of the women because it was a man's voice. Anyway, Mrs.Keddle rushed in almost immediately after we heard it. That leaves only Crisby and Elder. Elder's voice isn't much like Keddle's, but Crisby's is.

GORDON Mrs.Elder said they ALL heard it the first time.

WRIGHT Well, get her down and ask her to remember whether Crisby wasn't out of the room at the time.

GORDON (RISES AND CALLS UP THE STAIRS) Mrs.Keddle. There, Mrs.Keddle?

ESMA (OFF) Yes, Sergeant.

WRIGHT Tell Mrs.Elder to come down for a few minutes, will you please? Alone. (TURNS TO GORDON) I think you've struck it, Gordon. And the clay on the slippers. When did you notice that clay?

GORDON Just before you sent them all out of here.

WRIGHT (WRYLY) BEFORE we heard the Voice. Then that clay got on earlier in the night.

GORDON Looks like it.

WRIGHT Here (COMES TO L. OF TABLE R.C.) Put the exhibits out of sight for a few moments while I talk to her. No sense in scaring her further.

GORDON TAKES UP EXHIBITS AND TAKES THEM U.S. TO DESK. ENID ENTERS DOWN THE STAIRS AT R.

ENID You sent for me, Sergeant Wright?

WRIGHT Yes, Mrs.Elder. PLEASE SIT DOWN FOR A moment. There is something I wanted to ask you.

SHE SITS BEHIND TABLE R.C. WRIGHT IS TO HER LEFT.

You told me a little while ago that when the Voice was heard you all heard it.

ENID (SHIVERS) Yes.

WRIGHT Then you were all in this room together at the time?

ENID Yes. I think so.

WRIGHT You are quite sure nobody was absent?

ENID Ye...Why, I can't remember. Oh, yes. I think...I believe someone was out of the room at the time. (WRIGHT LOOKS AT GORDON WHO IS WATCHING HIM)

WRIGHT (TENSELY) Who was it?

ENID Let me see. Mrs.Eddle was over there; Jim and I were... (SHE THINKS A MOMENT) Crisby!

WRIGHT You mean? (GORDON LOOKS SATISFIED)

ENID Crisby was not with us.

WRIGHT You are quite sure of that?

ENID Yes, I remember quite well. Crisby was out in his own room.

WRIGHT His room is near the side door, isn't it?

HE GOES U.S. AND LOOKS OFF L.

ENID I believe so, though we hadn't looked over that wing of the house before....it happened.

WRIGHT And the side door was on the latch. (HE RETURNS TO HER) Thank you, Mrs.Elder. That is all I wanted to know.

ENID (RISES) Thank you. (SHE STOPS) Sergeant Wright. This is a terrible affair and I wish I could do something to help. I know the evidence against Jim is very strong but he is innocent. I know he is. He would not lie to me..even about this.

WRIGHT If I could prove your husband innocent Mrs.Elder I would be as happy as you could be.

ENID Thank you.

ENID GOES ACROSS AND EXITS UPSTAIRS.

GORDON Well, now that we know WHO the Voice is, we've got to discover the motive. What's his idea in going out there to play the phantom?

WRIGHT I don't know. But there must be one. (HE SITS IN THE ARMCHAIR)

GORDON Do you think he murdered Jarome?

WRIGHT Ask me something easy for a change.

GORDON (SITS ON CHAIR R. END OF SEPTTEE BACK TO FRONT)
Do you want facts or could you put up with a supposition?

WRIGHT Anything's better than nothing. What is it?

GORDON Well, when you arrived you made an appeal to them all to help if they could. Crisby, impressed by your little speech, decides to do his bit for you. He sneaks out into the bush and yells as his Uncle yelled, hoping it will work on the murderer's conscience and make him give himself away. Then he came back here quickly to note the effect.

WRIGHT Gordon, you're full of bright ideas, tonight. We'll get Crisby in and put the acid on him.

WRIGHT RISES AND GOES TO FOOT OF STAIRS.

Hullo!...Are you there, Mrs.Kedde? ...Mrs.Kedde?

ESMA (OFF) Did you call me, Sergeant?

WRIGHT Could you find Crisby for me please?

ESMA Yes Sergeant.

GORDON If we are on the right track, Serg., it means Crisby's wiped off the list of suspects. It's hardly likely that he's trying to scare himself into a confession, and in that case it leaves Elder, Mrs.Kedde, Quilton and Strom.

WRIGHT Somehow, I'm inclined to think Elder didn't do it.

GORDON What about Mrs.Kedde?

WRIGHT Well, she still has to explain that five minute delay in her appearance and also why she came into this room from the passage instead of from down stairs.

GORDON I think.....

WRIGHT MOTIONS HIM TO SILENCE. ESMA ENTERS DOWNSTAIRS.

ESMA I think Crisby is in his room. (CROSSES TOWARDS L.)

WRIGHT Thank you.

ENTER STROM UP D. HE AND MRS. KEDDE ARE BY DESK L.

ESMA Is Crisby there, Mr.Strom?

STROM Yes. I came for one of his books. (TAKES ONE FROM DESK)

ESMA The Sergeant wants him. I'll send him in. (EXITS L.)

STROM You didn't want me, took Sergeant?

WRIGHT No, not at present, Mr.Strom (STROM EXITS UP L.)
Where did you find Eddy Quilton?

GORDON At home, alone, almost paralytic with fright. I had to bring him down at the point of a gun. The nearer he got to the house, the bluer his funk got.

WRIGHT They say Keddle killed his daughter.

GORDON So I've heard.

WRIGHT But Qilton swears he didn't kill Jerome.

GORDON Don't they all?

RE ENTER UP L. ESMA AND CRISBY. GORDON RISES TURNING CHAIR RIGHT WAY ABOUT AND GOES DOWN BEHIND SETTEE. CRISBY STOPS BY DESK. ESMA PRESSES CRISBY'S ARM ENCOURAGINGLY THEN GOES ACROSS AND OUT DOWN PASSAGE.

WRIGHT Crisby (CRISBY SITS IN CHAIR R. OF SETTEE. WRIGHT COMES TO HIM TO C.)

WRIGHT Listen. We know you're trying to help us but it's making things very confusing.

CRISBY I don't know what you mean. (WRIGHT DISGUSTED COMES DOWN TO R. OF TABLE)

GORDON Won't you tell us what you're doing? And why?

CRISBY I'm not doing anything. I don't understand you.

GORDON We know you're trying to help catch the murderer, but...

CRISBY Catch the murderer? (RISES) Catch the man who killed Jerome Keddle? Why should I want to do that? (BACKING U.S.) Why should I want to catch the man who did what I hadn't the courage to do?

WRIGHT What! (LOOKS AT GORDON)

CRISBY I don't care who killed my Uncle. He's dead...and that's the main thing. If I KNEW who had done it, I wouldn't tell you. Why should I? Jerome Keddle deserved to die, the way he treated my Aunt. (HE THROWS BACK HIS HEAD CHALLENGINGLY) I don't care if his Voice has come back. I'll go out and defy it. What can a Voice do to you?

GORDON Cut it out, Crisby. You can try to deceive us if you like but it's no use because we happen to know that you....

HE STOPS IN MID SENTENCE AND ALL THREE BECOME REGID LISTENING BECAUSE OUTSIDE AND CLOSER THAN BEFORE COME THE MOANS THAT PRECEDE THE VOICES HORRIFIED GORDON LOOKS AT WRIGHT. WRIGHT, MORE PERPLEXED THAN EVER AND ALSO AFRAID IN SPITE OF HIMSELF, LOOKS AT CRISBY.

VOICE (OFF) Don't let them get my gold. (AD LIB. AS BEFORE)

CRISBY DIVES TO C. WITH SERGEANT AFTER HIM, CRISBY ON THE R. OF THE SERGEANT. WRIGHT SEIZES CRISBY.

CRISBY Let me go. I'm not afraid of my Uncle. I don't care if he's dead or not.

HE THRUSTS WRIGHT DOWN R. AND WRIGHT CANNONS INTO GORDON. WRIGHT GRABS FLASH-LIGHT FROM TABLE R.C. AND DRAWS REVOLVER.

WRIGHT After him!

GORDON GOES OUT PAST CRISBY AND EXITS. DOOR SWINGS WIDE OPEN, LIGHT FLOODING ONTO GROUND OUTSIDE. CRISBY STEPS OUT.

CRISBY There's no one here. (WRIGHT REACHES HIS SIDE AND FLASHES LIGHT ABOUT) There's no one here. Jerome! Uncle Jerome! Where are you? Your voice can't be there without you. Come on, I'm not afraid of you. I never was. I stayed because Aunt Esma stayed. I'm not afraid of you. I'm not afraid of a voice.

HE DOUBLES UP SLOWLY, SOBING AND SHAKING AND GOES DOWN ON HIS KNEES WHILE SERGEANT WRIGHT WITH ONE HAND ON HIS SHOULDER, FLASHES THE LIGHT AROUND ON THE SURROUNDING BUSH. THE VOICE HAS DIED AWAY AGAIN NOW AND CRISBY SOBS IN THE UNCARRY SILENCE.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

END OF ACT TWO

"THE VOICE OF JEROME KEDDLE"

Approx. 35 minutes.

"Philip Underwood"
(Nom de plume)

"THE VOICE OF JEROME KEDDLE"

ACT THREE

SCENE: THE SAME

TIME SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

DISCOVERED: CRISBY SPRAWLED IN CHAIR AT DESK, HIS ARMS FORWARD WITH HIS HEAD ON THEM. SERGEANT WRIGHT SITS ON CHAIR BEHIND TABLE, CHAIR TIPPED BACK AND HIS FEET ON TABLE. HE IS SMOKING A CIGARETTE VERY DELIBERATELY. BESIDE HIS BOOTS ARE THE FLASHLIGHT AND HIS REVOLVER. GORDON IS PACING TO AND FRO AT C. DOOR C.B. IS CLOSED. GORDON STOPS PACING UP R. AND TURNS TO CRISBY.

GORD. Crisby, you're a damned nuisance. You've complicated things just as were getting them a little straightened out. If you're not the Voice it means you go back onto the list of suspects. (COMING C.) Crisby. Do you hear?

WRIGHT Oh, leave him alone.

GORDON Don't you want to know about the slippers?

WRIGHT After. Let him get over his scare first.

GORDON Oh, all right. (HE GOES UP R. CRISBY LIFTS HIS HEAD)

CRISBY I wasn't scared. (WRIGHT LIFTS HIS FEET FROM TABLE)

WRIGHT Crisby, go and get some rest. Have a lie down, at least. (LOOKS AT HIS WATCH) It's four o'clock.

CRISBY It won't be light till five and a lot can happen in an hour.

GORDON That's what we're hoping.

CRISBY I couldn't sleep, Sergeant. He's coming back.

GORDON We'll give him a hot time if he does.

CRISBY It WAS my Uncle. I should know his hateful Voice...and he'll come back to help you find his murderer, damn him.

WRIGHT Most considerate of him if he does, I must say. Murdered people are so noticeably reticent. (RISES) Now trot along, Crisby, there's a good fellow.

CRISBY RISES BUT HESITATES THEN EXITS UP L.

WRIGHT I don't suppose he will sleep (SITS)

GORDON Don't blame him. I haven't yawned yet and I don't suffer from insomnia. (COMES DOWN R. ENTER QUILTON UP L.)

EDDY Sergeant...

WRIGHT What is it, Eddy?

EDDY (COMES TO BACK OF SETTEE) Look 'ere. I've heard that thing twice, now. Get me out of this.

WRIGHT Can't be done.

EDDY It can be done. If you don't get me out, I'll run for it and you can kill me if you want.

WRIGHT (RISES) You'll stay here, Eddy, so make up your mind to it.

EDDY You'll send us all mad, that's what you'll do. Whether we're guilty or not.

WRIGHT You'll stay here. Anyway, you're frightened to run for it.

EDDY I know I am. And wouldn't you be? Would you go out through that bush now? Would you go out and face it?

(GOES UP TOWARDS DESK AGITATEDLY. ENTER UP L. MRS. KEDDLE. SHE CROSSES QUILTON)

ESMA (DULLY) I've made coffee, Sergeant. Shall I bring you in some?

QUILTON SITS AT DESK WITH HIS HANDS ON IT.

WRIGHT Thank you Mrs.Keddle. It might stimulate my brain. It needs stimulating.

ESMA And you, Mr.Quilton?

EDDY Coffee? Yes. (SHE TURNS TO GO. EDDY'S FACE ASSUMES A LOOK OF CONSTERNATION) (HE RISES ABRUPTLY) No. I don't want any coffee.

WRIGHT Make up your mind, Eddy.

EDDY (LEANING AGAINST DESK) I don't want any. I couldn't drink it.

ESMA Everyone else is having it, Mr.Quilton.

EDDY Well, I'm not. I don't want it, I tell you.

EDDY EXITS QUICKLY UP L.

GORDON Mrs.Keddle, Eddy doesn't want any coffee.

ESMA SHRUGS AND EXITS UP L.

Do you think she knows anything about the Voice?

WRIGHT It's a man's voice, not a woman's.

GORDON I know, but Elder is the only man who hasn't been present when it has been heard...and his voice is not very like Jerome's.

WRIGHT He could disguise it.

GORDON But why should he want to do it in the first place?

WRIGHT For the same reason we thought Crisby wanted to do it. To scare someone into a confession, to clear himself.

GORDON Maybe.

ENTER UP L. ESMA WITH TWO COFFEES ON TRAY. COMES TO BACK OF TABLE AS WRIGHT RISES. SETS CUP TOWARDS GORDON. WRIGHT GOES U.S.

GORDON Thank you Mrs.Keddle; much obliged.

ESMA It was no trouble. (PUTS CUP ON OPPOSITE SIDE OF TABLE)

WRIGHT (UP BY DESK) Thank you, Mrs.Keddle.

ESMA (TURNS TO GO, STOPS) Have you the time, Sergeant?

WRIGHT (CONSULTS WATCH) Five past four.

GORDON Then it's the darkest hour before the dawn.

ESMA There never has been any dawn for me. I have lived a night. One grim night. (DESPAIRINGLY) but the dawn always does follow the darkest hour, doesn't it, Sergeant.

WRIGHT AND GORDON LOOK AT HER CURIOUSLY THOUGH SHE DOES NOT LOOK AT THEM. ESMA GOES UP AND EXITS UP L. GORDON SITS IN ARMCHAIR, CROSSES HIS LEGS AND

GORDON I feel sorry for Mrs.Keddie.

WRIGHT So do I...but if she is the guilty one I'll take her.

GORDON Come and drink your coffee whil it's hot.
(DRINKS SOME OF HIS)

WRIGHT Yes...Good Lord!

GORDON What's the matter?

WRIGHT (COMES DOWN QUICKLY TO C.) Have you drunk any of that coffee?

GORDON Some of it...why?

WRIGHT That bottle of strychnine's disappeared.

GORDON What? (HORRIFIED HE LOOKS INTO HIS CUP THEN SETS IT DOWN ON TABLE)

WRIGHT Someone's taken it.

GORDON Yes, I have...And I've forgotten the antidote.

WRIGHT Quick. Out to the kitchen (RUNS GORDON THAT WAY. GORDON LEAVES CUP ON TABLE) Mustard' and plenty of it. Get everything out of your inside.

GORDON You bet I will.

ENTER ESMA UP L. WITH TRAY AND THREE CUPS ETC. ON IT. GORDON PASSES HER AND RUSHES OFF UP L. SHE IS SURPRISED. WRIGHT MEETS HER AT L.C.

WRIGHT Have you given that coffee to anyone else?

ESMA No. I'g just taking some up to Mr. and Mrs.Elder and Mrs.Maxwell.

WRIGHT Oh, no, you're not. Give me that tray.

SHE DOES SO, SURPRISED. HE COMES R.C. AND PUTS IT ON TABLE. MRS.MAXWELL ENTERS DOWNSTAIRS WHILE HE IS DOING SO.

Mrs.Maxwell, DON'T DRINK ANY OF THAT COFFEE.

HE EXITS AT RUN UP L.

MRS. MAX. Me? I don't need coffee to keep me awake, tonight. Oh, whatever's the matter now?

ESMA I'm sure I don't know. Something has disturbed him.

RE ENTER WRIGHT UP L. WITH TRAY AND COFFEE POT. COMES R.C. AND PUTS TRAY ON TABLE.

WRIGHT Mrs.Maxwell would you please go upstairs agan? When I want you down here I'll send for you.

MRS. MAX. But sergeant, you don't want me here. You know I didn't do anything. Can't I go home?

WRIGHT No, you can't go home. You can go upstairs. (POINTS)

MRS. MAX. Oh, you dreadful person. I wish you'd let me go before Jerome Keddie gets back. (GOES OFF UPSTAIRS)

WRIGHT Sit down, Mrs.Keddie.

SHE CROSSES TO CHAIR BEHIND TABLE AND SITS.

ESMA What does it mean? (GORDON ENTERS UP L.)

WRIGHT I'll tell you presently. (GOES TO GORDON) How do you feel?

GORDON (EXPRESSIVELY) Empty....and burning internally.

WRIGHT That's only the mustard. You should be all right. We found out in plenty of time. Now go out and make a cup of tea. Tea, not coffee.....and no milk. The tamin should complete the trick but make it strong.

GORDON Don't worry. I'll make a spoon stand up in it. (HE EXITS UP L.)

WRIGHT (COMES C.) Mrs.Keddle, who were you trying to kill?

ESMA Kill?

WRIGHT Yes, kill; poison. That bottle of strychnine has been taken and I suspect you of trying to poison us all.

ESMA Sergeant!

WRIGHT I don't know for certain if it's in the coffee but I'll soon find out. That's my cup, that's tropper Gordon's. On that tray are cups intended for Mr. and Mrs.Elder and Mrs.Maxwell. I'd like to know if there's death in all of them.

ESMA This is terrible. I didn't take the bottle.

WRIGHT DIPS SPOON IN HIS OWN CUP AND TASTES IT.

WRIGHT There. Slightly bitter. I'ts there all right. Mrs.Keddle you say you did not put anything in this coffee that shouldn't be there.

ESMA Yes. (HER REPLIES NOW ARE BEING FORCED)

WRIGHT Was it possible for anyone else to put anything in it?

ESMA I don't see how they could have done so when I made it myself.

WRIGHT(You made it in the kitchen?

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT Did you leave it while you were making it?

ESMA It was ready boiling when I came in to ask you would you have some.

WRIGHT Did you mention you had made coffee when you were out there?

ESMA Yes. A moment before I came in to tell you.

WRIGHT So that anyone out there could have slipped into the kitchen and doctored the coffee in your absence!

ESMA I suppose so. Yes.

WRIGHT Anyone say they didn't want it.

ESMA Only Mr.Quilton.

WRIGHT Hm! I remember (GOES L.) Eddy changed his mind rather suddenly when he was sitting at the desk.

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT Well, Crisby was at the desk. He could have done it. So was Strom. He came in for a book for Crisby. He could have done. So was Quilton. He could have done it....or you could be lying to me... (TURNING ON HER)

ESMA I'm not lying. Why should I want to poison you?

WRIGHT Because I know so much about everyone.

ESMA What do you know about us?

WRIGHT Perhaps I know who killed Jerome. Perhaps I'm only waiting for the person to give themselves away. Perhaps I know why we've been hearing Jerome's voice.

ESMA I did not murder my husband but I know who did.

ESMA Crisby doesn't want to find out.

ESMA It wasn't Crisby, if that's what you mean. I know who it was.

~~WRIGHT~~ Who?

ESMA Why should I tell you? You would demand evidence; proof.... and I haven't any to offer you, but I know...here (PRESSES A HAND TO HER BREAST)

WRIGHT (AFTER PAUSE) Mrs.Keddle, please. Won't you tell me?

ESMA You will all know very shortly. Let me do this MY way, Sergeant Wright.

WRIGHT I want to know. I must know.

ESMA Don't despair, Sergeant. Before daylight you'll know.

WRIGHT You seem to be more confident than I am.

ESMA Because I think it is so obvious. You see, Jerome is coming again tonight.

WRIGHT I don't quite understand yet.

ESMA He'll come back and tell us.

ENTER ELDER DOWN THE STAIRS.

JIM Sergeant Wright, Mrs. Maxwell wants to go home.

WRIGHT (FURIOUS) Mrs.Maxwell CAN'T go home.

JIM Couldn't you send Trooper Gordon with her? There's no need for any of us to go.

WRIGHT No one leaves this house tonight. That's final, Mr.Elder.

JIM Vvety well...but if anything else happens before daylight she'll be an hysterical wreck.

WRIGHT I'll take that risk.

ENTER UP L. CRISBY, STROM, QUILTON AND GORDON IN THAT ORDER. CRISBY STANDS BY CHAIR AT DESK. STROM COMES DOWN L. GORDON AT DOOR UP L.

WRIGHT Quilton (QUILTON COMES DOWN BEHIND SETTEE)

EDDY What d' y' want? (GORDON GOES TO DOOR C.B.)

WRIGHT Changed your mind about having coffee rather suddenly, didn't you?

EDDY I knew what was in it. (JIM SITS IN ARMCHAIR R.)

WRIGHT How did you know?

EDDY Because when I was sitting at the desk there I saw it was gone.

WRIGHT You say it was gone.

EDDY Yes.

WRIGHT You didn't take it by any chance when you rushed out?

EDDY No.

WRIGHT Why didn't you tell me it was gone?

EDDY Oh, I dunno. I didn't know what t' do. It's this house. It horrifies you. It robs a man of his reason.

WRIGHT That's too bad. You can go. Eddy.

EDDY TURNS AND GOES OFF UP L.
Crisby. (CRISBY COMES DOWN TO L. OF WRIGHT AT C.)

CRISBY What?

WRIGHT Did Mr. Strom come in here for you a little while ago just before we heard the Voice?

CRISBY Yes. He came in for a book for me. I thought I'd be able to study a bit but I couldn't.

WRIGHT Oh. And why did you leave this house tonight in your dressing gown?

CRISBY (TOO EAGERLY) I didn't.

WRIGHT Then how did you get that road clay on your slippers?

CRISBY What clay? (LOOKS DOWN. HE IS SILENT. HE COMES DOWN BEFORE SETTEE L.)

WRIGHT You haven't answered me yet, Crisby.

CRISBY I went out...before Jerome was killed.

WRIGHT Your reason?

CRISBY I.....I thought I saw someone out there in the bush. (SITS ON SETTEE)

WRIGHT And you went out to see who it was?

CRISBY Yes.

WRIGHT And who was it?

CRISBY I don't know. When I got out there I couldn't see anyone, so I came in again.

WRIGHT Why didn't you mention this before?

CRISBY Because I thought I had been mistaken

WRIGHT Exactly when was this?

CRISBY Immediately before Jerome was....before it happened.

WRIGHT Which way did you go out and come in?

CRISBY By the side door.

WRIGHT Which was on the latch awaiting Mr. Elder's return.

CRISBY Yes.

WRIGHT And you say no one?

CRISBY No one. Several minutes after I heard Jerome talking to someone in here.

WRIGHT You heard both of them?

CRISBY Only Jerome. He was....was calling out "send back my voice to haunt them" then something about his murderer's conscience.

WRIGHT What did you do?

CRISBY I came out to here but by that time it was all over. Mr. Strom and I came in here.

WRIGHT Mr. Strom was with you studying...before...when you heard someone outside?

CRISBY No.

WRIGHT I thought he was.

CRISBY I met him in this hall (OFF L.) coming out of the kitchen.

WRIGHT Now just when? Before the murder or after?

CRISBY Immediately after when I was rushing in here.

WRIGHT (TURNS ON STROM) So you weren't with Crisby studying after all?

STROM Yes I was, but I had a headache. I went to the kitchen for headache tablets.

WRIGHT And you took them in the kitchen.

STROM Yes. While I was there I heard Jerome scream and came into the hall and met Crisby outside his door.

WRIGHT It was you Crisby saw outside earlier.

STROM No.

WRIGHT Then maybe it was Eddy Quilton hanging around.

STROM That's quite likely.

WRIGHT Do you know what's happened here in the last fifteen minutes?

STROM No.

WRIGHT TAKES UP TRAY AND FLASHLIGHT FROM TABLE AND GOES FOR DOOR UP L.

WRIGHT Someone tried to poison us all with strychnine in the coffee. (ALL STARTLED)

STROM Good God. And we were going to drink it.

WRIGHT I want to take these away and see where the stuff originated. If its in all the cups, the intention was wholesale murder. If it's only in mine then it must have been put in by someone who knew I was going to get that particular cup (LOOKS AT ESMA). Gordon watch everybody while I'm in the kitchen.

GORDON I'll do that all right.

WRIGHT TAKES TRAY WITH CUPS ETC. AND GOES OFF UP L.

GORDON (PUTS CUP ON DESK) I've never enjoyed a cup of tea so much in my life. Someone gave me the devil of a fright. I suppose you all realise that whoever tried to do this poisoning must be the murderer? Otherwise there wasn't any object in it.

OFF, BUT MUCH LOUDER, WE HEAR THE MOANS IN KEDDLE'S VOICE.

JIM Listen!

THEY ALL STOP, LISTENING INTENTLY.

VOICE (OFF) Don't let them get my gold (ESMA SCREAMS) Don't let them get my gold. Don't let them get my gold.

A WINDOW IS HEARD TO OPEN VIOLENTLY OFF L. FOOTSTEPS RACE AROUND THE HOUSE OUTSIDE. GORDON JUMPS FOR DOOR C.B. WITH REVOLVER READY. SOMEONE BANGS ON IT FROM OUTSIDE.

WRIGHT (OUTSIDE) Open this door. (BANGS ON IT) Open this door, quick.

GORDON Who's that?

WRIGHT (EXASPERATED) It's ME, blast you.

(GORDON OPENS IT AND WRIGHT COMES IN)

GORDON We heard the Voice again.

WRIGHT So did I. And whoever it is, he or she or it must be a champion sprinter. This flashlight throws a two hundred yard beam and the ground's clear for that distance. (GIVES GORDON LIGHT)

GORDON How did YOU get out THERE?

WRIGHT I jumped out the kitchen window and ran around just as Mr. Strom could have had he wanted to.

STROM I didn't do that.

WRIGHT Or perhaps you could have followed Jerome out here and jumped IN the window so Crisby would find you in the kitchen.

STROM You're making wild guesses because you can't learn the truth.

JIM Get back to the Voice. What did you see?

WRIGHT Nothing unusual. Tall trees and dark bush.

JIM Are you sure it is someone? and if so, WHO is it?

WRIGHT That's what I'd like to know, Mr. Elder.

JIM Did you hear any footsteps? (QUILTON ENTERS UP L.)

WRIGHT No, I heard the Voice...that's all. No running, no one in sight. It's getting a bit light outside now, too, and I could see.

GORDON What's that on the ground? (PLAYING LIGHT OFF DOOR)

WRIGHT Where?

GORDON Out there across the track?

WRIGHT TAKES TORCH AND EXITS C.B. RE ENTERS WITH BOTTLE.

WRIGHT Ahha. The empty bottle. (HOLDS IT UP)

GORDON Think someone dropped it there?

WRIGHT Or threw it out a window.

GORDON It must have come from upstairs. It was lying in the front of this door.

WRIGHT It could have been thrown from a downstairs window to make us think it had come from upstairs. Couldn't it, Crisby?

CRISBY I know nothing about it.

WRIGHT Your room is on the ground floor with a window facing that way. I found something else, too.

GORDON What was it?

WRIGHT Something that I should have found hours ago but it has been such a dark night (LOOKS AT ESMA)

JIM Oh, why can't you stop being mysterious and tell us? What about the bottle? Who put it out there? Who tried to poison us? That's what I'd like to know.

GORDON There seems to be someone else hanging around this house besides us.

ESMA I know there is. It's Jerome. He's after the guilty person.

WRIGHT Will you shut up about Jerome for a while?

ESMA Well, it's plain enough, isn't it? He said he would come back and haunt us. Didn't Crisby hear him say it when he was dying?

JIM It seems funny. There's not another house for miles and a stranger wouldn't do it. There wouldn't be any reason.

ESMA (RISING) Besides, there is something that none of you seem to have noticed.

ESMA (XIX) What is it?

ESMA (DEPRESSED) Every time we hear that Voice.ITS CLOSER (THERE IS AN ELECTRIC PAUSE)

JIM She's right. It was distant at first where he died, now it's outside the door....

ESMA And the next time....

JIM The next time?

ESMA He'll come in. (PAUSE)

GORDON Eh, Serg. This is getting on my nerves. I don't believe in ghosts...or I didn't think I did until now, but...it's getting me. (RUNS A FINGER AROUND INSIDE HIS COLLAR)

WRIGHT'S Ghosts don't murder people and put strychnine in their coffee.

GORDON But it's not the same person doing that yelling. It's Keddle...or it's his voice, anyway.

STROM Sergeant. Can't you let us get away from here? (C. TO L. OF WRIGHT) We won't try to escape from you. We'll all go together and you can shoot anyone who makes a break for it, but GET US AWAY FROM THIS HOUSE.

ESMA It wouldn't be any use. The Voice would follow us.

WRIGHT Cheerful, aren't you? Gordon, get everyone down here in this room. Everyone. I'm going to stay on guard over you all until morning. Round up the others.

STROM SITS IN CHAIR R. END OF SCENE

GORDON Right. (CROSSES AND RUNS OFF UPSTAIRS R.)

WRIGHT You might as well make yourselves comfortable because no one leaves this room. We'll see if the famous voice will keep on...with everyone in here.

ESMA He'll keep on. He'll keep on until we find out who did it. He'll come back and tell us. Can't you imagine him standing in the doorway, pointing his shaking finger and telling us who murdered him?

WRIGHT Mrs.Keddle, control yourself. Everyone is nervous enough already.

ENTER GORDON SHEPHERDING MRX. MAXWELL AND ENID DOWNSTAIRS. MRS.MAXWELL PROTESTS AS USUAL, AND FLYING A HANDKERCHIEF.

MRS. MAX. (CROSSING) I told you it would come again. I can't stand it. I'll go out of my mind.

ESMA That's what he wants us to do.

GORDON TAKES MRS. MAXWELL TO SETTEE. ENID GOES TO JIM WHO RISES TO MEET HER. GORDON LEAVES MRS. MAXWELL AT SETTEE AND GOES UP CO. TO L. BACK. MRS. MAXWELL BEFORE SETTEE.

MRS. MAX. Who did it? Who did this awful thing? (ADDRESSING THE ROOM IN GENERAL) If we knew, the Voice might stop. You must be in this room; you must be; why don't you confess and save us all from this persecution?

SITS AS FAR FROM QUILTON AS POSSIBLE WITHOUT BEING TOO CLOSE TO STROM.

WRIGHT Now, we're all here, one happy big family. I don't think. Now listen, everyone. Jerome Keddle lies dead out there on his work bench and I'm no nearer finding out who killed him than I was when I arrived, but I'VE GOT TO KNOW. He swore with his dying breath that he would send back his Voice to haunt us and if it is his voice that has been coming, closer, then Jerome has been coming with it. Mrs. Keddle is right, though I hate having to confess it. Every time we hear that Voice it is closer. And if Jerome's body see fits to get up off his work bench and come in here to tell me who was guilty, I'll call it the working of a DIVINE JUSTICE and LET HIM IN.

MRS. MAX But if he comes in, what will you do?

WRIGHT I'll shoot and see what happens (PRODUCES REVOLVER) If I fire and I kill someone human, it's their own fault, but if I fire and the Voice still goes on, you can think what you like.

EXAMINES REVOLVER GORDON SITS ON CHAIR AT L. OF DOOR C.B. REVOLVER ON HIS KNEE.

GORDON Supposing it doesn't come again?

WRIGHT That wouldn't surprise me, now that I have everyone in here.

ESMA (BEHIND CHAIR AT TABLE R.C.) It will come. I know it will.

WRIGHT I wouldn't be so sure of that if I were you.

MRS. MAX. But Sergeant, she ought to know. He was her husband.

ESMA I can feel it. I can feel it. There's something out there, now, where Jerome died.

ENID How can you tell?

ESMA (APPEARS TO BE HALF IN A TRANCE) Something's telling me. Sergeant, Jerome's not in the shed on the bench. He's outside, coming along to this door. (TURNS TO LOCK U.S.) I know he is. Look! (SHE POINTS TO L. SHUTTER AND GORDON DUCKS ASIDE FROM IT TOWARDS DESK B.) I can see him through the shutters. Can't you see him?

EDDY (EMOTIONALLY) H It's impossible. He can't be there. He's lying dead on the bench.

ESMA I tell you he's there...by the window...standing outside the door, now. On the step. Oh, Sergeant. I can't bear to see him again; not now.

WRIGHT GOES TO R. OF DOOR. GORDON TO L. OF IT.

ENID (DIVINING THEIR INTENTION) Oh, don't open it. Don't open it.

ESMA He's there. I know he is.

THE GROANS IN JEROME'S VOICE BEGIN OFF OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

MRS. MAX. The Voice!

VOICE (OFF - VERY LOUD) Don't let them get my gold.

CRISBY Keep out of here, Jerome. We don't want you back with us.

VOICE Don't let them get my gold.

WRIGHT Open that door, Gordon. (GORDON ABOUT TO DO SO)

MRS. MAX. Oh, no...no...no...NO.

EDDY No, don't open it. Oh, my Gawd. Don't let him in.

WRIGHT Right!

GORDON THROWS OPEN DOOR. WRIGHT FIRES TWICE QUICKLY THEN ONCE.

VOICE Don't let them get my gold. (LAUGHS INSANELY AS USUAL)

WRIGHT IT HASN'T STOPPED

ESMA IT HASN'T STOPPED

STROM (REELING TO HIS FEET WITH HANDS RAISED)Make it stop or I'll go mad.

ESMA LOOKS AT STROM WITH A QUICK GLANCE OF HORROR AND CONFUSION. ~~WRIGHT~~

LOOKS AT ESMA ALSO IN SURPRISE AND SUDDEN UNDERSTANDING.

ESMA (TRAGICALLY) Dayne. Dayne!

STROM Don't let him come in, Esma. Don't you see? I killed him.
I KILLED HIM.

HE BREAKS DOWN AND SINKS DOWN WITH HIS HEAD AND ARMS ON THE CHAIR. FROM WHICH HE HAS RISEN. THERE IS A DEAD SILENCE IN THE ROOM WHILST OUTSIDE THE SOUNDS OF THE VOICE LAUGH THEMSELVES AWAY. AS THE VOICE FADES STROM'S SOBBING SUBSIDES.

ESMA (WHISPERING) Dayne...it was....you. Oh God. I thought it must be Edy Quilton.

VERY SLOWLY SHE SITS ON CHAIR BESIDE HER. SHE IS VERY TIRED AND OLD.

ESMA You can...close the door, Sergeant. You won't hear Jerome's voice...any more.

WRIGHT I know....Thank you for your...co-operation, Mrs.Keddle. You played your part...too well.

(ESMA SHUDDERS)

MRS. MAX. (WHISPERING HOARSELY) But he might be still out there...

EVERYONE SPEAKS VERY QUIETLY IN CONTRAST TO RECENT COMMOOTION. NO ONE MOVES. STROM IS QUITE.

ESMA There is no need to be afraid. It isn't Jerome. It isn't anyone.

WRIGHT CLOSES THE DOOR C.B. VERY QUIETLY.

WRIGHT Watch Strom, Gordon.

GORDON Yes, Sergeant. (STANDS US. BY WINDOW)

WRIGHT The strychnine had been put into the coffee percolator. You did that too, Strom?

STROM Yes. I was afraid of you. You knew so much about us all.

WRIGHT Not nearly enough.

STROM I thought I was doing something rather wonderful. Not long ago I asked Esma to come away and she said "No, Dayne. I can't. Not while Jerome lives"...and so I killed him.

ESMA Oh, Dayne.

STROM (RISES TO HER) You remember what you said about not being able to alter Destiny without making things worse, Esma? Well, you were right because I tried it and this is what I've done.

MRS. MAX. But the Voice?

WRIGHT I found the voice when I went out to pick up that strychnine bottle. I told you I should have found it hours ago. It's a gramophone pick up on a cord. That's all. It comes through a hole in the wall to a gramophone under the stairs. Pulling the cord in through the wall made the Voice come closer.

MRS. MAX. But who turned it off and on?

WRIGHT Mrs. Keddle, I suppose.

ESMA Yes.

WRIGHT That is something I WOULD like to know.

ESMA A slow speed record that was blank until the end, when it had the cries you've heard. I could put it on then be in here when the Voice was heard. It was Jerome's idea. He wanted his Voice to be heard after he died and he had the record made. He made me promise I'd play it if he died.

WRIGHT It's almost daylight. You'd better come in with us now, Strom.

STROM Yes.

ESMA Dayne.

STROM No. (HE PUTS HER BACK FROM HIM) I'm sorry, Esma. There were so many things I could have done for you....so many things I wanted to do. Goodbye.

GOES UP STAGE. GORDON EXITS C.B. STROM FOLLOWS HIM OFF AND WRIGHT FOLLOWS STROM UP TO DOOR. JIM AND ERID ARE DOWN R. MRS. MAXWELL IS CRYING QUIETLY. OUTSIDE THE LIGHT IS GROWING STRONGER. INSTEAD OF LOOKING DARK AND MYSTERIOUS THE BUSH LOOKS DULL AND GREY. WRIGHT COLLECTS HIS HAT, FLASHLIGHT, ETC. AND AFTER LOOKING AT ESMA FOR A MOMENT HE MAKES A GESTURE OF HELPLESSNESS AND EXITS AFTER STROM C.B.

ESMA GOES UP TO DOOR. SHE STANDS LOOKING OUT TO WHERE THE DAWN WHITENS THE BUSH. DAWN LIGHT IS FILLING THE ROOM, ROBBING IT OF ITS QUALITY OF MYSTERY. MRS. MAXWELL HAS STOPPED SOBING. ESMA BOWS HER HEAD QUIETLY ON HER CLASPED HANDS. SHE DOES NOT WEEP BUT STANDS SILHOUETTED AGAINST THE GROWING LIGHT FROM OUTSIDE.

THE CURTAIN SLOWLY FALLS.

"THE VOICE OF JEROME KEDDLE"

FINALE.