

## ACT ONE

*Dramatic, sinister music sets the scene as the houselights go down. The next section could be pre-recorded, or acted out live. All we see are silhouetted figures - or possibly just shadows on the front curtain. One of the voices is that of Doctor Short. The other, his wife, could be played by any actress, as this is the first and only time she figures in the play. As we join the action, a terrible row is in progress.*

**Mrs Short:** What the hell's got into you tonight? Are you drunk?

**Short:** No, not drunk. Intoxicated, perhaps. But not drunk.

**Mrs Short:** You're behaving like a spoilt child.

**Short:** Perhaps I'm just jealous.

**Mrs Short:** Jealous? Jealous of what??

**Short:** Jealous of me, of course.

**Mrs Short:** Rupert, if this is some kind of sick joke, I'm afraid...

**Short:** (*savagely vitriolic*) Jealous of my money. Jealous of my delightful country residence. Oh, not forgetting, of course, my dear friends - the most stomach-churningly "nice" circle of squares you could ever wish to meet at a golf club dinner.

**Mrs Short:** Rupert - what's wrong? Why are you talking like this?

**Short:** But jealous, perhaps most of all, of my beautiful wife. (*He grabs her wrist*)

**Mrs Short:** Stop it! You're hurting me.

**Short:** (*evilly menacing*) Oh, Victoria. Dear, sweet Victoria. Sugar-coated spouse of the good and respectable country doctor. You still don't get it, do you?

**Mrs Short:** (*distressed and crying*) Rupert...you're frightening me.

**Short:** Did you honestly think I was just going to sit back and let you have it all?

**Mrs Short:** (*a moment's pause*) Oh, my God!

**Short:** At last! The penny drops into its tiny slot. You always were stupid, Victoria.

**Mrs Short:** But...you're dead.

**Short:** No, my dear. You are.

*The silhouetted figure of Short raises a poker menacingly into the air. The woman screams. Lights to black. Then, on one front corner of the stage, a lamppost gently illuminates the Police Sergeant standing below.*

**Plod:** The perfect crime. Never thought I'd hear myself say the words. Twenty-five years I've spent under this helmet, man and boy. Thought I'd seen it all. Until that night. Murder is never a pleasant business. Especially for the one who's been murdered. But there's one thing that we in the force could always count on. Somewhere, somehow, the villain would make a mistake. Sure as eggs is eggs. The strand of hair, the dropped cigarette end, the shred of torn clothing, the fingerprint. After all, nobody's perfect. Or are they? Once in a lifetime, once in a thousand years, Nature plays a terrible trick on all of us. It's the nightmare that we in the force all dread. Coming face to face with a man who is possessed not only

with the heart of a devil, but also the mind of a genius. A man capable of planning, and committing...the perfect murder. So, what if there is no strand of hair? What if there is no cigarette end, no shred of torn clothing, no fingerprint? What if this man taunts you with his crime. Dares you to take on his brilliant, twisted mind. Well then, there really is only one last hope. To pit genius against genius. Good against evil. And, as the titanic battle of wills unfolds, a humble Police Sergeant can only stand...and marvel!

*Dramatic music swells, and the lights fade up to reveal Doctor Short, standing in his lounge.*

**Short:** Sergeant. Thank you for coming so quickly.

**Plod:** It's an unfortunate habit of mine, sir.

**Short:** May I offer you a cup of tea?

**Plod:** No thank you, sir. Not while I'm on duty.

**Short:** Something stronger, perhaps - a glass of whiskey?

**Plod:** Well, just a medium-sized one, then.

**Short:** (*pouring a drink*) I expect you're wondering why I sent for you.

**Plod:** No, sir.

**Short:** Very well, I'll tell you.

*Plod is standing admiring a mounted warthog's head on the wall. Short moves up behind him.*

**Short:** It's my wife, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Is it really, sir? Well, if you don't mind me saying so, you did the right thing.

**Short:** What?

**Plod:** (*gesturing to the warthog*) Always fancied something like that for 'er indoors - haven't got the name of the bloke who did it, have you?

**Short:** Oh, the taxidermist. Rogers. Frank Rogers. I think I've got his card somewhere. There you go.

**Plod:** Thank you very much, sir. Well, g'night, sir.

**Short:** Er, Sergeant, can we get to the point?

**Plod:** Point, sir?

**Short:** The reason you're here.

**Plod:** You sent for me, sir.

**Short:** That's right.

**Plod:** Why was that exactly?

**Short:** Nice to see you're beginning to ask searching questions.

**Plod:** Just doing my job, sir.

**Short:** Indeed.

**Plod:** Well, g'night, sir.

**Short:** Sergeant, I haven't finished! My wife has gone missing.

**Plod:** (*glancing at the warthog*) That wouldn't be your first wife then, sir?

**Short:** As a matter of fact it isn't. How did you know that?

**Plod:** I like to stay alert, sir.

**Short:** Anyway, the fact remains, she's disappeared.

**Plod:** When did you last see her?

**Short:** Just before she disappeared.

**Plod:** And you haven't seen her since?

**Short:** Not to my knowledge.

**Plod:** Mmm. Perhaps I'd better take a few particulars, sir.

**Short:** That would be nice.

**Plod:** Fire away, sir.

**Short:** With what?

**Plod:** Some particulars, sir.

**Short:** Any particulars in particular, Sergeant?

**Plod:** Let's start with the name, shall we, sir?

**Short:** Short. Victoria Short.

**Plod:** And your wife's name?

**Short:** My wife's name is Victoria Short.

**Plod:** That must get very confusing, sir.

**Short:** Only to a policeman. Shall we start again, Sergeant?

**Plod:** I think that would be wise, sir.

**Short:** My name is Doctor Rupert Short. My wife's name is Victoria Short. It's easy to tell us apart. I'm here, she's missing.

**Plod:** Missing? Perhaps I'd better take a few particulars.

**Short:** *(through gritted teeth)* Whatever you say, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Can you give me a description, sir?

**Short:** *(this line should be customized to match a description of Plod)* Yes, about five feet ten, thirteen stone, balding, with a little black Hitler moustache.

**Plod:** No, I meant a description of your wife.

**Short:** That was a description of my wife.

**Plod:** Oh. Are you sure you want me to find her, sir?

**Short:** I'm pulling your leg, Sergeant. *(Pointing to a framed photograph on the wall)* Actually, my wife is very beautiful.

**Plod:** Is that her, sir?

**Short:** No. That's just a photograph of her. She's actually much bigger than that.

**Plod:** And presumably she's also in colour.

**Short:** Yes.

*Plod holds a piece of paper against the wall next to the photograph, and begins to sketch a ridiculously naïve picture.*

**Short:** What are you doing?

**Plod:** Police sketch, sir. I'll have this circulated around the village.

**Short:** Well that should do the trick. It's an uncanny likeness.

**Plod:** Thank you, sir.

**Short:** Look, why don't you just take the photograph?

**Plod:** May I, sir?

**Short:** Of course.

*Plod unceremoniously takes the photograph from the wall. In doing so, he tears off a large strip of wallpaper, which remains attached to the frame.*

**Plod:** I'll file a report with our missing person's department - I'm sure she'll show up sooner or later, one way or another, dead or alive. Well, g'night, sir.

**Short:** Is there nothing else you can do?

**Plod:** Like what?

**Short:** Well aren't you at least going to conduct a search?

**Plod:** If you say she's not here, sir, I believe you.

**Short:** Not of the house, you buffoon! Of the country!

**Plod:** All right, all right, sir. Calm down. I know you're under stress. But it's not going to get us very far if you go around calling me a baboon, is it sir?

**Short:** I did not call you a baboon, Sergeant. I called you a buffoon.

**Plod:** A wind instrument?

**Short:** That's a bassoon.

**Plod:** Give up.

**Short:** A clown, Sergeant. I called you a clown.

**Plod:** Oh, right. Well, g'night, sir.

**Short:** Sergeant! Look, I'm a very wealthy man. If you can pull a few strings, I'd be...extremely grateful.

**Plod:** Are you trying to offer me a bribe, sir?

**Short:** Good Heavens, no!

**Plod:** Are you trying to offer me a bribe, sir?

**Short:** Good Heavens, yes.

**Plod:** How much?

**Short:** A hundred.

**Plod:** Two hundred.

**Short:** One fifty.

**Plod:** Done.

*Short hands Plod a wad of notes.*

**Short:** I want the top man, Sergeant. Do you hear me? The best.

**Plod:** Can I use your phone, sir? I'd like to call Scotland Yard.

**Short:** Of course.

**Plod:** Do you happen to know the code for Scotland from here, sir?

**Short:** I think you'll find Scotland Yard is actually in London, Sergeant.

**Plod:** *(after eyeing him up suspiciously, he finally smiles)* You're pulling my leg again, sir!

**Short:** No, honestly. Here, let me get the number for you. *(He finds the number in a*

*directory and shows Plod) There, you see.*

**Plod:** Lord love a duck! Whatever will they think of next! *(He dials the number and conducts a ridiculously short muttered conversation, after which Plod seems in a state of mild shock)*

**Short:** Well?

**Plod:** Amazing.

**Short:** What?

**Plod:** I never thought they'd agree.

**Short:** Agree to what?

**Plod:** You asked for the top man, sir.

**Short:** And?

**Plod:** They're sending...him, sir.

**Short:** Him?

**Plod:** Oh, you're a lucky man, sir.

**Short:** I am?

**Plod:** He's a genius.

**Short:** A genius, you say?

**Plod:** He doesn't usually handle missing persons cases, but, well, I had to tell a little porky.

**Short:** Just tell me who it is, Sergeant!

**Plod:** Inspector Drake, sir.

*A short drone of dramatic music, as the lights fade to a tight centre spotlight on Short.*

**Short:** Drake! Well, well. It couldn't have worked out better. The legendary Inspector Drake. What a fascinating challenge.

**Plod:** *(stepping into the spotlight)* Sorry, sir?

**Short:** Nothing. *(Lights back up)* I look forward to meeting him.

**Plod:** He'll be here at ten o'clock, sir.

**Short:** Until tomorrow then...

**Plod:** Tonight, sir.

**Short:** Erm, I don't think so, Sergeant. It's ten now.

**Plod:** Not quite, sir.

**Short:** Well, nevertheless, Sergeant, he won't be here by ten o'clock.

**Plod:** Inspector Drake is never late, sir.

**Short:** I admire your loyalty, Sergeant, but I'm sure we'll forgive him if he's a little late.

**Plod:** *(sitting on the settee)* Inspector Drake is never late, sir.

**Short:** Would you like to bet me...one hundred and fifty pounds that Drake will not be here by ten o'clock, Sergeant?

**Plod:** No, sir.

**Short:** I thought not.

**Plod:** I'd like to bet you two hundred pounds he won't be late, sir.

**Short:** Intriguing. *(He checks his watch, peeks out of the curtained windows, and produces another wad of notes from his pocket)* Very well, you're on. *(Sitting on the settee)* What time do you make it, Sergeant?

**Plod:** Eight seconds to ten, sir.

**Short:** Seven, six, five, four, three... *(he looks around, and smiles)*. You owe me two hundred pounds, Sergeant.

*Drake pops up from underneath the middle cushion of the specially-doctored settee. He immediately snatches the money from Short's hand, and pockets it.*

**Drake:** I think not. *(He hands a coin to Plod)* Your usual commission, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Thank you, sir.

**Short:** *(recovering from the shock)* How do you do. I'm Short.

**Drake:** *(refusing the handshake)* How do you do. I'm quite tall. Excuse us - police business. *(Aside, to Plod)* All right, Sergeant - what have you got?

**Plod:** Nasty one, sir. The geezer over there reckons his name's Victoria, sir.

**Drake:** Victoria?

**Plod:** It gets worse, sir. He reckons that's his first wife.

**Drake:** It's a warthog, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** A dead warthog.

**Plod:** Very much so, sir.

**Drake:** It's going to be one of those nights. I can sense it.

**Plod:** Do you think he's lying?

**Drake:** Who would lie about being married to a warthog?

**Plod:** Exactly, sir.

**Drake:** All right. What do we know about her?

**Plod:** She's a warthog, sir.

**Drake:** Apart from the fact that she's a warthog.

**Plod:** She's dead, sir.

**Drake:** Apart from the fact that she's a dead warthog.

**Plod:** Very little, sir.

**Drake:** Name?

**Plod:** Plod, sir. Sergeant Plod.

**Drake:** Not you! Her!

**Plod:** Oh, er...Victoria, sir.

**Drake:** They're both called Victoria?

**Plod:** Yes, sir. Then there's the second wife, er...

**Drake:** Don't tell me - her name is Victoria.

**Plod:** Hah. No, sir!

**Drake:** Good.

**Plod:** *(checking his notes)* Oh, yes, sir!

**Drake:** Let's simplify this, shall we, Sergeant? Apart from us two, is everyone else involved in this case called Victoria?

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** Right.

**Plod:** Apart from Frank.

**Drake:** Who's Frank?

**Plod:** The taxi driver, sir.

**Drake:** Go on.

**Plod:** He's the one who mounted her and stuffed her.

**Drake:** A taxi driver called Frank mounted her and stuffed her.

**Plod:** Yes, sir. And judging by the look on her face, I reckon it was the last thing he did before she died.

**Drake:** So let me get this straight. We have a man called Vicky, who's married to a warthog, also called Vicky. She is accosted by a taxi driver called Frank, who mounts her, and stuffs her. Meanwhile, Vicky's second wife, also called Vicky, disappears.

**Plod:** And who can blame her, sir? She takes one look at what happened to the first wife, and scarpers. Open and shut case.

**Drake:** I think I'll come in again, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Right, sir.

**Short:** Perhaps I could explain, Inspector...

**Drake:** Ah, Vicky.

**Short:** Rupert. Doctor Rupert Short. My wife is Victoria.

**Drake:** Your wife is not the issue here, Doctor. All right, Rupert... Rupe... Roo... Let's establish a few ground rules here. First of all, I don't like you. But I'm going to put up with you because I have a job to do. It's not a pleasant job, but someone's got to do it, and I expect nothing less than your total cooperation. *(He pronounces the word as coop-eration, rather than co-operation)*

**Short:** What the hell are you talking about, Inspector?

**Drake:** What the hell I are talking about, Vicky, is murder. In case it has escaped your notice, a violent crime has been committed here.

**Short:** Has it?

**Drake:** Hasn't it?

**Plod:** I don't know, sir.

**Drake:** Get over here, Sergeant. *(Aside)* Why am I here?

**Plod:** Nobody else was available, sir.

**Drake:** What's going on? Come on, out with it.

**Plod:** *(sulkily)* His wife's disappeared.

**Drake:** A missing person's case?

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** I don't do missing persons.

**Plod:** But sir...

**Drake:** I don't do missing persons, Sergeant! I only do murders. Would you like me to turn this into a murder?

**Plod:** No, sir.

**Drake:** Right, that's it. I'm going home.

**Plod:** Please, sir! Take the case! Just this once.

**Drake:** (*suspicious*) Why?

**Plod:** He was...most insistent, sir.

**Drake:** How much?

**Plod:** Sorry, sir?

**Drake:** The bribe- how much?

**Plod:** What bribe?

**Drake:** Two hundred.

**Plod:** One hundred.

**Drake:** One fifty.

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** Hand it over.

**Plod:** But sir...

**Drake:** Hand it over! (*He does*) And the small. change.

**Plod:** But sir...

**Drake:** Empty your pockets. Now!

*Plod hands over some small change, including a bent penny, which Drake examines and hands back.*

**Drake:** If there's one thing I can't stand it's a bent copper. All right, Sergeant. Ten minutes. If there's no sign of a murder by half past ten, I'm going home.

**Plod:** Right, sir.

**Drake:** Vicky! I think perhaps we got off on the wrong foot.

**Short:** Perhaps you should know from the outset, Inspector, I do not tolerate fools gladly.

**Drake:** Then boy, are you in for a rough evening. (*Short starts checking his appearance in the mirror above the fireplace. Drake looks up at the warthog*) Handsome beast.

**Short:** Thank you, Inspector. You're not so bad yourself.

**Drake:** I meant the warthog.

**Short:** Tease.

**Drake:** Where did you two first meet?

**Short:** On holiday in Canada.

**Drake:** Tell me, did she...er, did she die of natural causes?

**Short:** Of course not. I shot her.

**Drake:** (*Aside*) All right, Sergeant, I'm staying.

*The phone rings, and Plod silently answers it.*

**Short:** Could we actually concentrate on the business in hand?

**Drake:** Which is?

**Short:** Finding my wife.

**Drake:** Ah, yes. (*Picking up a photograph on the mantelpiece*) The missing wife.



**Short:** That's my daughter, Sabrina.

**Drake:** No, that's just a photograph of her.

**Short:** Touche.

**Drake:** Where's the real thing?

**Short:** In Canada. While we were over there on holiday she fell in love with a Mountie called Mervin. Married him and never came home. That was three years ago.

**Plod:** Sir.

**Drake:** Yes, Sergeant?

**Plod:** It's Inspector Morse, sir.

**Drake:** Excuse me. *(Urgently taking the receiver)* Yes, Morse.

*We hear a short morse code statement, and Drake slams down the receiver.*

**Drake:** Bloody hoax calls. Sergeant?

**Plod:** Sir?

**Drake:** No more calls.

**Plod:** Right sir. *(Plod immediately produces a pair of scissors and unceremoniously cuts through the telephone wire, unseen by Drake. Then, Drake turns)*

**Drake:** Unless it's extremely urgent.

**Plod:** Yes, sir. *(Plod sheepishly looks at the wire, and begins trying to tie the ends back together)*

**Drake:** Right- to work. *(He takes out a magnifying glass, with which he proceeds to scour the room. He finally settles on examining a certificate on the wall)* The 200 Club. What's this?

**Short:** That, Inspector, is one of the world's most exclusive clubs. It's an elite branch of Mensa - to be a member you have to have an IQ of 200 or more. There are only four of us in the country.

**Drake:** Oh, so you and the Sergeant already knew each other?

**Plod:** Sorry, sir?

**Drake:** Never mind. *(Spotting a bottle of champagne and two glasses)* Expecting company?

**Short:** I was rather hoping my wife might return.

**Drake:** *(spotting a chessboard with a game in progress)* And is she your chess opponent?

**Short:** Victoria? Yes, sometimes. She is an exceptional player, by normal standards. But I'm afraid the only person capable of giving me a really stimulating game...is myself.

**Drake:** You play with yourself?

**Short:** When Victoria's not in the mood, yes. What about you?

**Drake:** Never!

**Short:** I bet I could mate you in three moves.

**Drake:** You just bloody try it, mate.

**Short:** It's my one great weakness, Inspector. I'm obsessed with games of logic.

Chess. Backgammon. Ker-Plunk. I yearn to pit my wits against a worthy opponent.

But for the last few years it's been getting very boring. You see, Inspector, I always, always win. *(He makes a chess move)*

**Drake:** *(retaliating with a move)* So do I.

**Short:** What a fascinating scenario. If we play against each other, one of us must lose.

**Drake:** That's right.

**Short:** So, what's your favourite game, Inspector?

**Drake:** Murder.

**Short:** An interesting choice. I must challenge you some time. *(He makes another move on the chess board. From now on, Drake and Short will take it in turns at key moments to make a move, setting up the idea of a challenge between them)*  
Your move.

**Drake:** Mmm. *(Thoughtfully making his move)* Your wife had blonde shoulder-length hair, and a strawberry-coloured mole on her back.

**Short:** Good Lord, how did you know that?

**Drake:** I slept with her last week. Just my little joke, Doctor. Actually, I deduced it from this entry in your wife's diary. *(He picks up a diary from a coffee table, and reads from it)* "November 14th- made an appointment to have my blonde shoulder-length hair cut. It's now almost down to the strawberry-coloured mole on my back". Sergeant - this is important evidence.

*The Sergeant produces a small plastic bag, into which Drake attempts to put the diary. The bag is slightly too small, despite Drake's attempts to stretch it.*

**Drake:** Has your wife got a smaller diary?

**Short:** No.

**Drake:** Get a larger bag, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Sir.

*Exit Plod. Drake notices something behind the settee, and stoops to examine it.*

**Drake:** Spilled something down your settee, Vicky?

**Short:** What? Oh, yes, I did spill a little coffee over it the other evening. I tried everything to get the stains out. In the end I used bleach. Made rather a mess of it, I'm afraid.

**Drake:** Yes. Haven't you just. Ah, Sergeant. *(Plod has entered, with a huge plastic bag, approximately four feet square, into which Drake pops the diary)* And the pencil. *(Plod pops the pencil into the bag)* We'd better take the table as well. *(They put the coffee table into the bag)* Run that past the boys in the lab. See what they come up with.

**Plod:** Right, sir.

**Drake:** And see if you can find this taxi driver - what was his name?

**Plod:** Vicky, sir. No, Frank.

**Drake:** Frank. Put out an APB.

**Plod:** What's an APB, sir?

**Drake:** Sergeant, you're a policeman! Surely you know what an APB is!

**Plod:** Why don't you remind me, sir.

**Drake:** (*struggling*) All right, let's not worry about that now. Just get cracking.

**Plod:** Sir.

**Drake:** Oh, and Sergeant. (*Aside*) The 200 Club.

**Plod:** Oh, yes, sir. The exclusive branch of Mensa. To be a member you have to have an IQ of 200 or more.

**Drake:** How did you know that?

**Plod:** I entered for it last year, sir. I did quite well actually.

**Drake:** Really.

**Plod:** Yes, sir. Apparently they only failed me on the mental part of the exam.

**Drake:** Shame. Anyway, there are only four members in the country. He's one of them...

**Plod:** And you want me to find out who the other two are.

**Drake:** I knew I could rely on you, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Consider it done, sir.

*Exit Plod, with bag and contents.*

**Drake:** (*examining the fireplace, he emerges with a blackened nose*) Been having a fire, Vicky?

**Short:** Yes, I had a fire last night, as a matter of fact.

**Drake:** Isn't it a little warm for fires?

**Short:** On the contrary. If you check the weather report you'll see that we had a freak hail storm here last night.

*Short hands Drake a newspaper. The large headline reads "Freak Hailstorm Here Last Night". Disgruntled, he discards the newspaper. He flicks on a radio just long enough to hear the words "freak hailstorm here last..." and then switches it off peevishly.*

**Drake:** Mmm. (*Checking the fire's companion set*) The poker.

**Short:** What about it?

**Drake:** It's missing. (*He makes a quick chess move*)

**Short:** You're very observant, Inspector.

**Drake:** It's my job to be observ...arrgh!

*Drake, walking forward, has fallen off the front of the stage. Plod re-enters with the plastic bag and contents, plus a lab report.*

**Plod:** Sir?

**Drake:** (*bouncing up, casually*) Well everything seems okay down here. Ah, Sergeant! (*He stretches out his hand for Plod to help him up. Plod tugs at his sleeve, and*

*falls back as the arm of Drake's jacket comes completely off in his hands)*  
Interesting room you've got here, Vicky.

**Short:** You should try the steps next time. Well, I have work to do. If you need me, Inspector, I'll be in the library.

*Short exits. Drake proceeds back on stage via the steps.*

**Drake:** What's the news, Sergeant?

**Plod:** Pretty much as we thought, sir. Here's the lab report. It confirms our suspicions. A diary, a pencil, and a coffee table.

**Drake:** Mmm. What's that fourth item?

**Plod:** Er...plastic bag, sir.

**Drake:** Thorough as ever, eh? All right, put the table and the pencil back. I'll hang on to the diary. You never know, there might be some rude bits in it.

**Plod:** I'm afraid not, sir.

**Drake:** All right, bin it.

**Plod:** Oh, I've also started interviewing all taxi drivers in the area, sir. So far, none by the name of Frank.

**Drake:** How many have you asked?

**Plod:** One, sir.

**Drake:** And his name wasn't Frank.

**Plod:** No, sir. Well, I don't think so. That's one question I forgot to ask him.

**Drake:** Stick at it, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Sir.

**Drake:** Oh, Sergeant. Any news on the 200 Club?

**Plod:** (*consulting his notebook*) Oh, yes sir. Very strange. According to official records, there are only three members, not four. There's a Doctor Rupert Short, whoever he might be, some woman, and an old git, sir.

**Drake:** And that's what the official Mensa records said, is it, Sergeant? Some woman and an old git.

**Plod:** That was the gist of it, sir.

**Drake:** But definitely only three people?

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** Mmm. I wonder why he said there were four?

**Plod:** Perhaps he can't count, sir.

**Drake:** Thank you, Sergeant.

*Drake discovers a beaker with colourless liquid in it on a side table. He sniffs at it suspiciously. Short enters.*

**Short:** I wouldn't touch that if I were you.

**Drake:** What is it?

**Short:** Highly concentrated sulphuric acid.

**Drake:** Sergeant. (*He beckons Plod over*) Thirsty?

**Short:** I wouldn't, Drake. It will kill him.

**Drake:** He enjoys his work. Sergeant, could you lend me a hand?

**Plod:** Of course, sir.

**Drake:** Good man.

*Drake grabs Plod's hand and plunges it into the container. It bubbles, courtesy of some fizzy soluble aspirins Plod is holding, as Plod writhes in agony. Drake continues to hold Plod's hand in the liquid, as he talks casually to Short.*

**Drake:** Tell me, Doctor. What would this stuff do to metal?

**Short:** Dissolve it, of course.

**Drake:** Completely?

**Short:** Yes. Given time.

**Drake:** Forgive me if this sounds like a stupid question, but why have you got a beaker of sulphuric acid in the house?

**Short:** It is a stupid question, Inspector, but I will forgive you. I'm a scientist, I work with all manner of chemicals.

**Drake:** *(finally letting the agonized Plod remove his hand)* All right, Sergeant, thank you.

*Plod thrusts his hand into a vase of flowers for relief, and in the process gets his hand stuck in the vase. Enter Sabrina, with a suitcase.*

**Sabrina:** Hello, daddy.

**Short:** Sabrina! What the hell are you doing here?

**Sabrina:** I've left Mervin. I couldn't stand it any more.

**Short:** What happened?

**Sabrina:** I found him in bed with an elk. He said they were only petting, but frankly it crushed my self confidence. You were right, daddy - I should never have married him. I've come home.

**Short:** Sabrina, this really isn't a good time.

**Sabrina:** Daddy...what's wrong? What's this policeman doing here?

**Short:** Darling, it's your mother.

**Sabrina:** This policeman's my mother?

**Short:** No, Inspector Drake and the Sergeant are here to help look for your mother.

**Sabrina:** Victoria? What's happened to her?

**Short:** We don't know, darling. She's...disappeared.

**Sabrina:** Disappeared?

**Short:** I'm sorry.

**Sabrina:** Uhh! *(She faints)*

**Drake:** Sergeant - brandy.

**Plod:** Sir!

*Plod tries to pour a brandy, but is hampered severely by the vase stuck on his hand*

**Short:** I'll do it.

*Short pours a glass of brandy and rushes it to Drake, who swigs it off instantly.*

**Drake:** That's better. Now, call a doctor.

**Plod:** Right, sir.

**Short:** I'll get my bag.

*Short exits. Plod tries to phone a doctor, but quickly realizes he's cut the telephone wire, and puts the receiver down sheepishly.*

**Drake:** Did you call a doctor?

**Plod:** Er...

**Short:** *(rushing in with a doctor's bag)* I'm a doctor!

**Drake:** Good work, Sergeant! Now give me a hand.

*They struggle to lift her up. Meanwhile, Short prepares a large syringe.*

**Drake:** On the settee, Sergeant.

**Plod:** Right sir.

*Plod drops Sabrina and sits on the settee.*

**Drake:** Not you! Her!

**Plod:** Oh, right sir.

*They eventually get her onto the settee, and Short prepares to inject her.*

**Drake:** What's that?

**Short:** Just a light sedative.

**Drake:** Oh no you don't!

**Short:** What the hell do you think you're doing?

*A struggle ensues between Short and Drake, which culminates in Plod, who is bending over trying to free his hand, getting the syringe jabbed into his bottom. The impact causes him to pluck his hand from the vase, and he is left, eyes bulging, holding the flowers. From that moment he begins staggering around the stage, desperately trying to stay on his feet under the influence of the injection. The syringe is dropped on the floor.*

**Short:** Now look what you've done!

**Drake:** She's coming round.

**Sabrina:** I'm all right. Leave me alone. I just want to know what's happened to Victoria.

**Short:** I'm sorry you had to find out this way. If I'd only known you were coming...

**Sabrina:** I tried telephoning from the station, but I think the phone must be out of order.

**Drake:** Check that, would you, Sergeant?

**Plod:** (*barely conscious*) Er, right, sir.

**Sabrina:** Daddy, aren't you pleased to see me?

**Short:** Of course I am, I'm just...tired, that's all. It's been an exhausting day.

**Sabrina:** I can imagine. The Sergeant looks shattered.

**Short:** If you don't mind, Inspector, I'm going to retire.

**Drake:** It's nice to know you can afford it.

**Short:** Sabrina will see you out. Do keep me in touch with your progress, Inspector.

**Drake:** (*with sinister undertones*) Don't worry, Vicky, when I find out what happened to your wife, you'll be the first to know.

**Short:** (*smiling*) Your move, Inspector.

*Short exits. Plod finally collapses over the back of the settee, ignored by everyone.*

**Sabrina:** (*after he has exited, feeling dejected*) Goodnight, father.

**Drake:** He was obviously pleased to see you.

**Sabrina:** I've never seen him like this before. He's behaving very strangely.

**Drake:** Did you two part on bad terms?

**Sabrina:** On the contrary. I've always been very close to my father. Well, as close as you can be on the other side of the world. (*Looking at Plod*) Is he all right?

**Drake:** I don't know. Drink?

**Sabrina:** Shouldn't you do something?

**Drake:** Like what?

**Sabrina:** What about mouth-to-mouth resuscitation?

**Drake:** I'd rather French kiss the warthog.

**Sabrina:** It's a boar.

**Drake:** Yes, isn't it just. (*Passing her a drink*) Besides, if there's any mouth-to-mouth going on around here, I'd rather you be at the other end.

**Sabrina:** Oh, Inspector. You don't waste any time, do you?

**Drake:** Not where rumpy pumpy is concerned.

*Drake closes in to kiss her.*

**Plod:** Get in there, son!

**Drake:** (*drawing away*) Feeling better, Sergeant?

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** Right, I've got a job for you. (*He picks up the syringe*) I want you to get this analyzed.

**Plod:** It's a syringe, sir.

**Drake:** Yes I know it's a syringe! I want to know what was in it!

**Plod:** Oh, I'm not sure I'm up to riding my bicycle at the moment, sir. I'm still feeling a little dopey.

**Drake:** Well if we wait for that to clear up we'll all die of old age. God, look at him.  
A half wit on half power. A quarter wit.

**Plod:** I'll have a go, sir.

**Drake:** Never mind, I'll do it myself. Wait here - and don't let her out of your sight.

**Plod:** Right sir.

**Drake:** If I'm not back in five minutes...wait another five minutes.

*Exit Drake. Sabrina pours Plod a drink.*

**Sabrina:** Here, drink this . It will make you feel better.

**Plod:** Thank you, Miss.

**Sabrina:** He's an interesting man, your Inspector friend.

**Plod:** The best, Miss.

**Sabrina:** Do you think he can find my mother?

**Plod:** If anyone can, Miss. Mind if I help myself to another drink?

**Sabrina:** Of course not.

**Plod:** Tell me, Miss - did your father love your mother?

**Sabrina:** Does a bear shit in the woods?

**Plod:** Er, I'm not sure, Miss. I could probably find out for you.

**Sabrina:** No, no. It's just an expression I picked up on my travels, Sergeant. It means "of course"...like erm..."Is the Pope a Catholic".

**Plod:** You've got me again, Miss.

**Sabrina:** Never mind, Sergeant.

*Enter Drake, with a child's chemistry set, from which he takes various beakers, test tubes, etc.*

**Drake:** Miss Short, I'll need your help.

**Sabrina:** Of course.

**Drake:** I need sodium chloride, some acetic acid...

**Sabrina:** Oh, I don't think...

**Drake:** Just common table salt, household vinegar...

**Sabrina:** Right!

**Drake:** And a large haddock.

**Sabrina:** Coming up.

*She exits.*

**Drake:** I'm starving. All right, Sergeant - let's see what we have here. (*Drake squirts the contents of the syringe into a beaker, and starts to perform a ludicrous series of tests on the liquid, with Plod taking notes*) Specific gravity, five point one.

**Plod:** Five point one, sir.



**Drake:** PH balance, seven point four five.

**Plod:** Seven point four five, sir.

**Drake:** Protein absorption ratio....eighty.....four.

**Plod:** P.A.R...eighty-four, sir.

**Drake:** No, no, no! Eighty-three.

**Plod:** No, no, no, eighty-three, sir.

**Drake:** Densitometer infusion suffix - eight to the power three.

**Plod:** Eight to the power three, sir.

**Drake:** Molecular viscosity...negative.

**Plod:** Negative, sir.

**Drake:** Right, Sergeant - what have we got?

**Plod:** A complete load of bollocks, sir.

**Drake:** Oh, bummer it. *(He swigs at the liquid, gargles, then spits it out into Plod's helmet)* Aha! A mild sedative, eh?

**Plod:** Well, sir?

**Drake:** Methyl Anti-Hystadine.

**Plod:** Menthol Tetra-Chloradine?

**Drake:** Precisely.

**Sabrina:** *(re-entering with a wrapped-up fish)* Excuse my ignorance, Inspector, but what exactly is Tetryl Hexaphobadobadine?

**Drake:** Poison. Just one drop of this Chlora Flora-testaclecleaner is enough to poleaxe a savage bull, or even slow down the Sergeant here. But this syringe was not intended for the Sergeant.

**Plod:** You mean?

**Drake:** That's precisely what I mean. *(Pause)* You don't know what I mean, do you?

**Plod:** No, sir.

**Sabrina:** I think I know what you mean, Inspector, and it's preposterous.

**Drake:** I'm sorry to put it to you so bluntly, but I fear your father was trying to kill you.

**Sabrina:** That's nonsense. It was a simple mistake.

**Drake:** What's more, I think he may have murdered your mother.

**Sabrina:** You're wrong, Drake, wrong. Do you hear me? I won't listen to any more of this nonsense!

*Sabrina stuffs the fish into Drake's hands and storms out.*

**Drake:** Follow her, Sergeant!

**Plod:** Right, sir.

*Plod pops on his dripping helmet, exits sharply after Sabrina, and re-enters instantly.*

**Drake:** Well?

**Plod:** She's sleeping, sir.

**Drake:** *(picking up a chesspiece)* Poor kid. Just a pawn in a brutal game of draughts. *(Drake opens up his fish supper, only to find a whole, uncooked fish. He tosses it away)* Well, Sergeant. What do your guts tell you?

**Plod:** That I shouldn't have had that third curry last night.

**Drake:** Do you know what my guts tell me?

**Plod:** No, sir.

**Drake:** That he did it. He killed his wife. Brutally. Savagely. Clinically. Unemotionally. Cold bloodedly. And pre-meditatedively. I think he picked up the poker from the hearth, and with one, sudden, savage blow, sent it crashing down onto her defenceless body. *(He gives Plod the benefit of a demonstration, using his truncheon, which sends Plod plummeting down behind the settee)* This is where they were standing - right here - by the settee. He then coolly burnt all his bloodstained clothes in the hearth, bleached the stains from the settee, and dissolved the poker in acid. *(Drake passes behind the settee, lifting up as he walks on the unconscious Plod, who lets out a muted yelp)* Yes, I know what you're thinking, Sergeant. You're thinking, if he did murder her, why would he call in the Police to look for her? Logic, Sergeant. He knew others would eventually notice her disappearance, and that then he'd be under immediate suspicion for not reporting it earlier. So, as soon as he was sure he'd removed all the clues, he called you in, and played the worried husband. *(He sits on the settee. Again Plod groans)* Yes, I know what you're saying, Sergeant. I'm only guessing. We have no proof. And something's not right. There's something missing.

*Plod drags himself up and over the back of the settee, and makes an indistinct grunt.*

**Drake:** That's right, Sergeant. Motive. *(Getting up and pacing around once again)* All right, let's examine what we have here, Sergeant. We have a missing woman - or rather, we don't have a missing woman, because she's missing. We have a daughter who arrives back unexpectedly from Canada, after demounting a Mountie. We have a doctor who tries to poison that daughter. We have a new poker, a jar of acid, a hearth full of charred ashes, and a bleached sofa. In short, Sergeant, we have all the ingredients of a murder. But what we do not have, is a reason why. What we do not have, is a motive.

**Plod:** What about murder, sir?

**Drake:** That's not a motive.

**Plod:** Isn't it?

**Drake:** No.

**Plod:** What is it, then?

**Drake:** Well it's a...it's a...it's a thing.

**Plod:** Oh, right, sir.

**Drake:** A motive's like, well, like money.

**Plod:** What about money, sir?

**Drake:** No. He's already a wealthy man.

**Plod:** Or hatred.

**Drake:** What about hatred?

**Plod:** No, sir. Not hatred.

**Drake:** You think he loved his wife, do you?

**Plod:** Does the Pope shit in the woods?

**Drake:** What?

**Plod:** Is a bear Catholic?

**Drake:** What the hell are you talking about, Sergeant?

**Plod:** Just expressions, sir. They mean "of course".

**Drake:** They mean "no".

**Plod:** Do they?

**Drake:** Can you imagine the Head of the Catholic Church nipping behind a tree for a quick crap?

**Plod:** I suppose not, sir.

**Drake:** Or a giant, hairy grizzly bear saying three Hail Marys?

**Plod:** It sounded logical at the time.

**Drake:** Stay away from logic, Sergeant. You haven't got the necessary equipment.

**Plod:** What if they just had a row, sir, he lost his temper, and bashed her one?

**Drake:** Maybe, Sergeant. But that doesn't explain why he should want to kill his own daughter. His own flesh and blood. No, Sergeant, whichever way you cut the mustard, it just doesn't stack up.

**Plod:** Mustard, sir?

**Drake:** No, thanks. No, this was no straightforward murder, Sergeant. There's something deeper going on here. And what we need is a clear-cut motive . (A *flash of inspiration*) What about sex, Sergeant?

**Plod:** Is that an order, sir?

**Drake:** No, Sergeant. What about sex - as a motive?

**Plod:** How d'you mean, sir?

**Drake:** Imagine you fell in love with a stunning, nubile young lady. Would that be enough to make you...

**Plod:** Oh, yes, sir.

**Drake:** Let me finish the question!

**Plod:** Sorry, sir.

**Drake:** Would that be enough to make you kill your wife?

**Plod:** (*instantly*) Oh, yes, sir.

**Drake:** (*again examining a chess-piece*) So, maybe there's another player in this evil game we've yet to meet. Sergeant, I want you to go upstairs...

**Plod:** (*heading straight for the door*) Right, sir!

**Drake:** Sergeant! Would you like to know why you're going upstairs?

**Plod:** If you think it would help, sir.

**Drake:** Yes, I think it would. Bear with me - it's not a long sentence.

**Plod:** Right, sir.

**Drake:** I want you to go upstairs, drag Vicky out of bed, and bring him here to me. I'd like another little chat with him.

**Plod:** Right, sir.

**Drake:** And Sergeant, remember he's innocent until proven guilty. I want him back here in one piece.

*Plod exits just as Sabrina enters. She puts her finger to her lips, playfully beckoning Plod not to let on that she's in the room, as she wishes to surprise Drake. She sneaks up behind Drake, who is bending to study the chessboard, and tweaks his bottom. Drake stops, stunned.*

**Drake:** One more stunt like that, Sergeant, and you'll be walking funny in the morning.

**Sabrina:** I already walk funny.

**Drake:** (turning) Oh, it's you.

**Sabrina:** I came down to apologise.

**Drake:** What for?

**Sabrina:** For storming off like that. I realize you're just trying to do your job. But you're wrong, Inspector. You couldn't be more wrong. Ours is a very close family. My father wouldn't hurt a fly, let alone his own wife and daughter.

**Drake:** If it's all the same to you, I'd like to keep an open mind on that.

**Sabrina:** As you wish. (*Spotting the chess board*) Do you fancy a game?

**Drake:** I'm already in the middle of one.

**Sabrina:** You just don't like the idea of being beaten by a woman.

**Drake:** Oh, I don't know. Look, I have to warn you. I've sent Sergeant Plod to get your father. He'll be down here any moment.

**Sabrina:** Are you going to interrogate him?

**Drake:** I have some more questions, yes.

**Sabrina:** (*lasciviously*) And what about me? Are you going to probe me unmercifully?

**Drake:** Maybe.

**Sabrina:** And what if I don't co-operate?

**Drake:** I could make it very hard for you.

**Sabrina:** I was hoping you'd say that. Kiss me.

*Their lips are about to meet, when Plod pops his head round the door.*

**Plod:** Er, sir.

**Drake:** (*patiently, belying his inner fury*) Ah, Sergeant. Any luck?

**Plod:** Not as much as you, by the look of it. Can I have a word, sir - in private?

**Sabrina:** It's all right, Sergeant. I was just leaving.

**Plod:** Sorry, Miss. Police business.

**Sabrina:** That's quite all right. Goodnight.

**Plod:** (*entering slowly. He is carrying an opaque plastic bag containing something hidden behind his back*) Hope I wasn't interrupting anything, sir.

**Drake:** (*putting his arm around him*) Not at all, Sergeant.

**Short:** (*reaching the door*) Goodnight.

**Drake/Plod:** (*cheerfully*) Goodnight!

*Exit Sabrina. As the door clicks shut, Drake's arm tightens on Plod's neck.*

**Drake:** Don't you ever...ever...do that again! D'you hear me?

**Plod:** Yes, sir!

**Drake:** You bastard! That's the nearest I've got to getting my leg over in years!

**Plod:** It's important sir.

**Drake:** Nothing...nothing, is more important than me getting my leg over - understand?

**Plod:** Yes sir!

**Drake:** Now, where's Doctor Shortarse?

**Plod:** He wasn't in his room, sir.

**Drake:** Then search the rest of the house!

**Plod:** I did, sir.

**Drake:** And you couldn't find him.

**Plod:** Oh, I found him all right.

**Drake:** Then where is he?

**Plod:** In the wine cellar, sir.

**Drake:** Drunk, eh?

**Plod:** No sir. Dead!

*Plod swings round with a dramatic look-to-front, as if he's expecting a music stab and spotlight. Drake taps him on the shoulder.*

**Drake:** Timing, Sergeant.

*Drake swings round, and there's a music stab and spotlight.*

**Drake:** Dead?

**Plod:** Yes sir.

**Drake:** Are you sure?

**Plod:** Well, I can't be absolutely certain, sir, because it was pretty dark down there, and I only managed to find the head. (*Producing and opening the bag*) But I reckon he's a goner.

**Drake:** Uggh! What's happened to it?

**Plod:** Very nasty, sir. It's been sliced into four equal pieces.

**Drake:** Oh, that reminds me, I must phone headquarters. (*He tries the phone*) Damn. Phone's dead too. Get over there straight away, Sergeant. Arrange for the head to be taken away and examined. Have your own done while you're at it. And bring me back everything we have on this Doctor Rupert Vicky Short.

**Plod:** Right, sir.

**Drake:** I'm going to break the bad news to his daughter.

*Music. Spotlight on Plod, still holding the head in the bag.*

**Plod:** So, amateur sleuths, what looked like an open and shut case - man murders wife with poker - suddenly has a bit of a nasty twist. Not only do we have an attempted murder on the daughter, apparently without a motive, but also the prime suspect for all these dirty deeds, Doctor Rupert Short himself, now comes in kit form. One thing's for sure, he's not going to be causing us any more trouble. *(The spotlight fades momentarily, then comes back up)* Or is he?

*Spotlight down, music. As the lights come up, Sabrina is wailing uncontrollably on Drake's shoulder. He is comforting her.*

**Drake:** There, there now. Come on. Yes, I know. It's all right. Shhh. Just try to relax...Shut up!!!!

*Sabrina, shocked into silence by Drake's final outburst, moves away from him, revealing a disastrous mess of mascara over her face. A disgruntled Drake looks down at his white shirt, which is now plastered in make-up.*

**Sabrina:** I'm sorry. *(Drake tears off the shirt and tie. There's another identical shirt and tie underneath)* First mother disappears. Then you accuse father of trying to kill me. And now he's..*(she breaks down again, rushes to Drake, and Sabrina blows her nose on his new shirt)*. I'm all right. Drake - it's now more important than ever that I clear my father's name. He's no murderer.

**Drake:** Are you sure?

**Sabrina:** I'd stake my life on it.

**Drake:** You almost did.

**Sabrina:** He's my father, damn it. He's wasn't capable of hurting anyone.

**Drake:** Not even in a fit of passion.

**Sabrina:** Never!

**Drake:** Perhaps he and your mother had a row...

**Sabrina:** No!!

**Drake:** Perhaps he just lost his head. *(Sabrina wails)* Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean...all right, all right. Look, there's something I have to say to you - it's going to seem very callous, but I have to say it.

**Sabrina:** What?

**Drake:** Well, the circumstances surrounding your father's death - the way we found him - lead me to believe that it was not suicide.

**Sabrina:** So?

**Drake:** So, that leads me to the inexorable conclusion that it might have been murder. Are you following me so far?

**Sabrina:** Perfectly.

**Drake:** Well, as you were the only other one in the house at the time...

**Sabrina:** Oh! Well that takes the biscuit! That really does put the icing on the cake.

That just about wraps it up in fancy paper and puts a little pretty-coloured bow on it, doesn't it, Drake?

**Drake:** Does it?

**Sabrina:** First you claim my father tried to murder me - now you're saying I murdered him!

**Drake:** Look, there's no need to take it personally.

**Sabrina:** Just who the hell do you think you are?

**Drake:** (*angry*) I'll tell you who the hell I think I are, shall I? I are the detective what's going to solve this case. And let me tell you exactly how I'm going to do it. First of all I take a man who's alive one minute, and dead the next. Then, I add up all the people in the house who could have done it - you, me, the Sergeant. Then, I take away the policemen. That leaves you. And let me tell you something else, Miss La-di-bloody-da Sabrina Shortbread. I don't feel sorry for murderers just because they're women - especially women who ruin my favourite shirt!

**Sabrina:** You're so sexy when you're angry.

**Drake:** Then marry me!

**Sabrina:** Yes! (*They fall in a passionate hug*) Oh, yes!

**Drake:** I'm sorry.

**Sabrina:** So am I.

**Drake:** Did you kill him?

**Sabrina:** No.

**Drake:** Good. I had to ask.

**Sabrina:** I know. (*Walking away from the hug*) Oh, Drake! I can't believe all this is happening.

**Drake:** (*pouring a whiskey*) Believe it, doll.

**Sabrina:** Look at the state of me. I must look dreadful.

**Drake:** Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. To me, you look...(*he looks up at her*)...reasonably okay.

**Sabrina:** How can you stay so cool? I'm a wreck!

**Drake:** Here, drink this. It'll calm your nerves.

*He hands the drink to Sabrina. His hand is shaking so much most of it ends up on the floor.*

**Sabrina:** Thanks. So, now how do you explain my father's death?

**Drake:** Well, if you didn't do it, there's only one other explanation.

**Sabrina:** The Sergeant?

**Drake:** No. Whoever did this had brains. Don't you see? It's the perfect crime.

You can't be accused of murder if you're dead.

**Sabrina:** You've lost me.

**Drake:** Who's the only other person who had access to the house?

**Sabrina:** Well, no-one.

**Drake:** Your mother!

**Sabrina:** My mother?

**Drake:** She could have set this up to look as if she'd been murdered, and then sneaked in to kill your father. She could also have changed the serum in your father's case for poison. It all fits.

**Sabrina:** Inspector. In the last ten minutes, you've accused my father of murdering my mother and trying to murder me, you've accused me of murdering my father, and now you're accusing my mother of murdering my father and trying to poison me. If we're to be married, I really think you should have more respect for my family.

**Drake:** It's a crazy mixed up jig-saw of a world out there, doll. I'm just trying to put all the pieces back in the frame in the right order to form one big piece.

**Sabrina:** (*bemused*) What?

**Drake:** Nothing.

**Sabrina:** Look, I'd better tell you - you'd find out anyway sooner or later. My mother is not my mother.

**Drake:** She's not?

**Sabrina:** No.

**Drake:** Whose mother is she then?

**Sabrina:** She's not anyone's mother. My real mother died when I was very young. My father re-married.

**Drake:** I see.

**Sabrina:** Three times.

**Drake:** Three times?

**Sabrina:** Yes. This is his fourth.

**Drake:** What happened to them?

**Sabrina:** They just kept...popping off.

**Drake:** Popping off??

**Sabrina:** Well, dying. All very innocent. My father was just unlucky with women. He attracted them like flies, of course, being rich, but, well, he just never picked a winner.

**Drake:** This plot, rather like a certain police Sergeant I know, is getting thicker by the minute.

**Sabrina:** Look - none of that changes my view about Victoria - that's my current step-mother, well, current if she's still alive. She's a good woman. And she loved him, I'm sure of it.

**Drake:** Well, one thing's for sure. Whoever did it, they're not going to get away with it. I'll track them down, even if it takes me the rest of my life.

**Sabrina:** Oh, Drake! Kiss me.

**Drake:** What, now?

**Sabrina:** Yes, now. I want to count your fillings with my tongue.

**Drake:** Grrr!

*Their lips are about to join, as Plod enters.*



**Plod:** Can I have a word, sir? It's important.

*Drake, exasperated, whimpers, then moves away and pours himself a large whiskey.*

**Sabrina:** Sergeant, come in. I'd like you to be the first to know. The Inspector and I are going to be married.

**Plod:** Married? But he's already mar...*(Plod's revelation is stopped mid-sentence as the contents of Drake's glass forcefully hit his face)*

**Drake:** You were saying, Sergeant?

**Plod:** Nothing, sir.

**Drake:** Now, what's so desperately important that it couldn't have waited two minutes?

**Sabrina:** Two minutes?

**Drake:** At least.

**Plod:** Can I have a word in private, sir?

**Drake:** *(to Sabrina)* Keep it warm, doll. *(He leads Plod to the front of the stage)*  
This had better be good, Sergeant.

**Plod:** The head, sir.

**Drake:** What about the head?

**Plod:** I've lost it, sir.

**Drake:** You've lost it.

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** What do you mean, you've lost it?

**Plod:** I haven't got it any more, sir.

**Drake:** What -you mean it's slipped into the lining of your jacket or something.

**Plod:** I just turned my back for one minute to, you know, have a you-know-what, sir, and when I looked again, it was gone.

**Drake:** Rolled away, had it?

**Plod:** I don't know, sir.

**Drake:** So, let me get this straight, Sergeant. I entrust you with the single most important piece of evidence we've yet uncovered - a dead man's head, no less, in a plastic bag - and you mislay it.

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** Never mind, Sergeant. These things happen, eh?

**Plod:** Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. I knew you'd be okay about it.

**Drake:** After all, we've only lost a head.

**Plod:** Yes, sir.

**Drake:** We'll just have to replace it, won't we?

**Plod:** Arrgh!

*Drake starts tugging at Plod's head, trying to pull it off.*

**Sabrina:** Inspector! What are you doing?

**Drake:** Just pulling his head off. Don't worry, it won't in any way affect his abilities

as a Policeman.

**Sabrina:** You're killing him!

**Drake:** That's right.

**Sabrina:** Let him go!

*Drake lets go. Plod shakes his head, then swiftly recovers.*

**Plod:** Oh, you've just jogged my memory, sir. I've got this for you. *(He hands over a file)*

**Drake:** What is it?

**Plod:** The file on Doctor Short. And I think you'll find it fascinating reading. For instance, did you know that Victoria Short was not Doctor Short's first wife, and that he'd been married three times before...

**Drake:** *(joining in with Plod)*... not Doctor Short's first wife, and that he'd been married three times before.

**Plod:** You did know.

**Drake:** Yes, Sergeant. But did you know that I was about to do this? *(He whacks him across the back of the head with the file)*

**Plod:** No, sir.

**Drake:** And what about this? *(This time Drake misses with his swipe, as Plod ducks)*

**Plod:** Yes, I knew about that one, sir.

*Drake stamps on his toe, by way of having the last word on the matter.*

**Sabrina:** Perhaps if you two spent less time squabbling you might get on with the important business in hand.

**Drake:** What important business?

**Sabrina:** Finding my step-mother!

**Drake:** Ah, yes. The mother. Murderer? Or innocent victim? What do you think, Sergeant? Are we looking for a killer, or a killee?

**Plod:** I've got a theory, sir.

**Drake:** I can't wait. Fifty quid says it's a real corker.

**Plod:** I think she was both.

**Drake:** Both what?

**Plod:** A killer and a victim.

**Drake:** Mmm. Go on.

**Plod:** Well, maybe she killed her husband by way of revenge.

**Sabrina:** Revenge for what?

**Plod:** For him murdering her.

**Drake:** Yes. I think you may have a slight chronology problem there, Sergeant.

**Plod:** A what, sir?

**Drake:** Chronology, Sergeant, from the ancient Greek word "kronos".

**Plod:** Kronos. What's that mean, sir?

**Drake:** It means you're a thick turd, Sergeant. Leave the theories to me.

**Plod:** Here, hang about. How would the ancient Greeks have known about me?

**Sabrina:** Inspector, please! My mother.

**Drake:** Don't worry, Miss Shortcake. I've got a sneaking suspicion that sooner or later, your mother will come walking through that door.

*Enter Miss Short*

**Plod:** That's amazing!

**Sabrina:** That's not my mother!

**Miss Short:** Well of course I'm not your mother. Who are you?

**Plod:** More to the point, Miss - who are we?

**Drake:** Shut up, Sergeant.

**Miss Short:** Where's Doctor Short?

**Plod:** I'm afraid Doctor Short is tragically...

*Drake silences Plod by sticking a banana in his mouth.*

**Drake:** Doctor Short is tragically...not well at the moment.

**Miss Short:** Not well?

**Drake:** A headache. A splitting headache.

**Miss Short:** Sergeant, I demand to know who these people are and what they're doing here.

*Plod responds according to the script below, but the banana in his mouth makes the sentence totally unintelligible.*

**Plod:** There's been an unfortunate crime committed here, miss. This is Inspector Drake of Scotland Yard - he's here to investigate.

**Miss Short:** Inspector Drake. I'm sorry. I didn't realize.

**Drake:** That's quite all right. Now, perhaps you'd like to tell us who are you?

**Miss Short:** I'm Doctor Short's daughter - Sabrina!

*There's a short, dramatic music stab, as Drake and Miss Short stare into a tight spotlight. The lights come back up.*

**Sabrina:** Don't believe her! She's lying!

**Miss Short:** And who are you?

**Sabrina:** I'm Doctor Short's daughter - Sabrina.

*Another music stab, as this time Drake, Miss Short and Sabrina stare into the spotlight.*

**Plod:** In that case, they're both Doctor Short's daughter, Sabrina!

*Plod lunges forward to stare into the spotlight - but this time there's no spotlight and no music. The others peel away.*

**Drake:** Not necessarily! One of them, is telling porkies!

**Miss Short:** What on earth are porkies?

**Plod:** Cockney rhyming slang, Miss. Porky pigs - lies!

**Drake:** Shut up, Sergeant. Right - which one of you two is the real Sabrina Short?

**Sabrina/Miss Short:** *(in unison)* I am!

**Drake:** And which of you is the fake Sabrina Short?

**Sabrina/Miss Short:** *(in unison)* She is!

**Drake:** Right, that's sorted that out.

**Miss Short:** Look, there's an easy way to settle this.

**Drake:** Which is?

**Miss Short:** Get my father in here. He'll verify who I am.

**Drake:** I'm afraid that's not going to be possible.

**Sabrina:** And she knows it! She's probably the one who killed him.

**Miss Short:** Killed him? You mean he's...

**Drake/Plod/Sabrina:** *(in unison)* Yes. As a dodo!

**Drake:** And no-one leaves this house until I find out who murdered him.

*Enter Doctor Short.*

**Short:** Who murdered who?

**Miss Short:** Father!

**Short:** Sabrina!

*Plod faints. A spotlight narrows on Drake.*

**Drake:** Well bugger me.

*Music. Curtain. End of Act One.*

