

# Marreau



and  
the



# Chocolate Policeman

A detective comedy by Robert Farrow in two acts. (c)  
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The original Marreau adventure. 4th Edition.  
G-rating edition (very minor alterations)

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# **MARREAU AND THE CHOCOLATE POLICEMAN**

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by Rob Farrow

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# Dramatis Personae

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Marreau</b>       | The famous continental detective       |
| <b>Gwendolyn</b>     | His secretary                          |
| <b>Simpson</b>       | His friend                             |
| <b>Bertie</b>        | Eldest son of Lady Eustace             |
| <b>Edward</b>        | Second son of Lady Eustace             |
| <b>Isabel</b>        | Edward's wife                          |
| <b>Lady Jane</b>     | Daughter of Lady Eustace               |
| <b>Major Trubolt</b> | Cousin of the Eustaces & family friend |
| <b>Angela</b>        | His wife                               |
| <b>Dr. Protheroe</b> | The family doctor                      |
| <b>Cummings</b>      | The Butler                             |
| <b>Mrs. Farley</b>   | The Cook                               |
| <b>Vincent</b>       | The Valet                              |
| <b>Daisy</b>         | The Maid                               |
| <b>Sgt. Farmer</b>   | A country policeman                    |

## Time Setting:

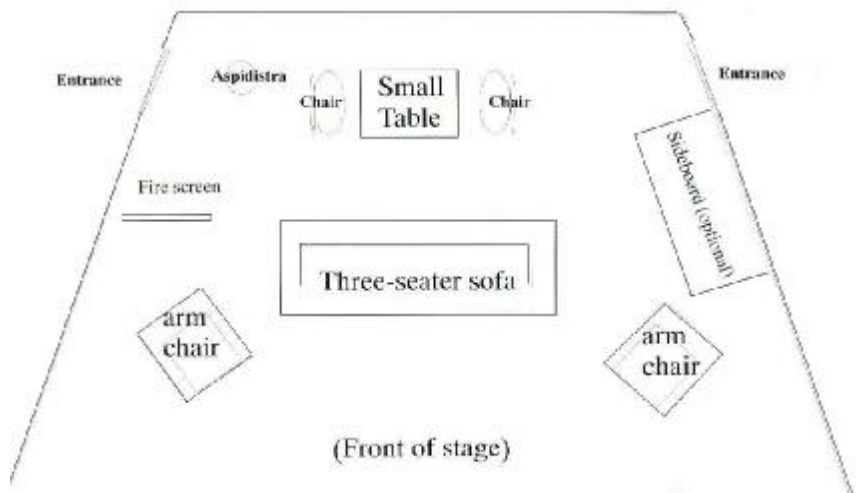
Set in the 1930's in an English country house.

## Stage Layout

Single set, parlor style setting.

# Marreau and the Chocolate Policeman

Approximate Stage Layout For Marreau & the Chocolate Policeman



# Act I Scene 1

*{A room in a country house, period sometime between 1920 and 1940. The famous continental detective - Marreau - is sitting reading his paper. His friend, Simpson, is idly peering through the window. His secretary, Gwendolyn Bayne, is going through some letters at the table. There is also a sofa, clock and general furnishings. Marreau speaks with an appalling French accent. There are a few moments of silence, broken occasionally by the rustle of Marreau's paper.}*

**Simpson:** Dashed strange, don't you think?

**Marreau:** *{lifting head from newspaper}* What? What are you talking about now, Simpson?

**Simpson:** Lemmings.

**Marreau:** Lemmings?

**Simpson:** Yes. The way they jump off cliffs for no apparent reason. Dashed weird, don't you think?

**Marreau:** It is a mite peculiar, I'll give you that.

**Simpson:** I suppose they have got a reason. Trying to fly or something, I should imagine.

**Gwendolyn:** *{with heavy sarcasm}* Probably been talking to you, more like.

**Simpson:** What? Oh yes I see - very witty.

**Gwendolyn:** Urm.

**Simpson:** You wouldn't be much good as a lemming, would you, Marreau?

**Marreau:** I'm sorry, I do not catch your slide.

**Simpson:** Catch my what?

**Gwendolyn:** I think he means drift. He doesn't catch your drift.

**Marreau:** Indeed - thank-you, my dear. I do not catch your drift.

**Simpson:** Well I mean, not much call for a private investigator, if everyone commits suicide anyway. I mean, murdering a lemming would be sort-of doing it a favour really. Saving it some time. Not having to run all that way to the cliff.

**Marreau:** Quite. However, if I were a lemming I think I would probably be more suited to Social Work - or a doctor perhaps - specialising in broken bones.

**Gwendolyn:** Good grief - I've heard some pretty idiotic conversations before. But "What I'd do if I were a lemming" has got to take first prize. Anyway, Marreau, I was somewhat surprised at your taking up Lady Eustace's invitation for a shooting weekend. Especially as you can't shoot.

**Marreau:** Marreau is an excellent shot.

**Gwendolyn:** If I were a pheasant I'd have to agree. I'd much rather have you shooting at me than - for example - someone who keeps his eyes open when he shoots!

**Marreau:** You are well aware, my dear, that I disapprove of murder. And to me the - how you say - bagging of defenceless galliformes falls into that category. I miss on purpose.

*{A SHOT IS HEARD OFFSTAGE}*

**Marreau:** What was that?

**Simpson:** Sounded like a shot to me.

**Marreau:** That was what was known as a rhetorical question.

**Simpson:** Still sounded like a shot to me.

**Gwendolyn:** He meant that he knew it was a - Oh, what's the point!

**Marreau:** Precisely. Of course it was a shot, and from the report, I would say that it was a twelve-bore shotgun, using Eley Alphamax cartridges, fired from a Grembling's over & under mach 37 B.

**Simpson:** Gosh, Marreau! How can you be so precise?

**Marreau:** Experience, pure experience. And intelligence, of course. Self-denial of common comforts. The selfless study of man's methods of killing. A knowledge of shotguns since 1842. The ability to differentiate the smell of 196 types of gunpowder, and the memorising of the report volumes of the worlds 835 most popular sporting guns.

**Simpson:** Wow!

**Gwendolyn:** Don't you think we ought to go and see who's shot what?

**Simpson:** Oh, probably just a late pheasant.

**Gwendolyn:** Very late, I'd say. It has gone midnight.

**Simpson:** Crikey, the chap must have pretty keen eyesight!

**Gwendolyn:** Have you got a brain?

**Marreau:** Enough of this banter. Marreau will investigate.

*{Cummings, the Butler enters - distraught}*

**Cummings:** The most dreadful thing - the most dreadful, dreadful thing.

**Marreau:** Out with it, Cummings.

**Cummings:** Lady Eustace - she's been accidentally shot!

**Marreau:** Shot!

**Gwendolyn:** What?

**Simpson:** Not ....?

**Cummings:** With her revolver.

**Marreau and Simpson:** Revolver!

**Gwendolyn:** Better make it 836 popular guns Marreau.

**Marreau:** Hmph. Is she dead?

**Cummings:** Yes - very.

**Gwendolyn:** *{waspishly}* I wasn't aware there were degrees of death! Sure she isn't just slightly dead?

**Cummings:** Oh no! She's very dead indeed.

**Marreau:** How did it happen?

**Cummings:** Well she appears to have been cleaning her revolver, when she accidentally shot herself - up the nose.

**Gwendolyn:** Up the nose?

**Cummings:** Yes it would seem that the bullet went straight up her left nostril. Not a pretty sight!

**Gwendolyn:** Yuk.

*{Simpson is sick behind the aspidistra}*

**Marreau:** Marreau will investigate. I will go and view the body.

**Cummings:** No need, they're dragging her in here now.

**Marreau:** No! No!! NO!!! Do not move the body -

*{Marreau dashes offstage, followed by Cummings. There is a short pause.}*

**Gwendolyn:** Oh stop being sick, Simpson.

**Simpson:** Sorry Gwend. but I've this terribly weak -

*{Simpson dives behind aspidistra again. Marreau re-enters, accompanied by Dr. Protheroe, Major Trubolt, with his wife Angela, and Isabel, who is sobbing buckets.}*

**Major Trubolt:** Ghastly business.

**Dr. Protheroe:** Ghastly.

**Angela:** Not at all nice.

**Isabel:** *{Sob}*

**Angela:** Pull yourself together, Isabel!

*{Angela slaps Isabel across her face. Isabel cries even louder. Simpson dives behind aspidistra again. Another batch of people enter - Cummings with the cook, Mrs. Farley who is comforting the sobbing maid, Daisy, followed by Vincent the Valet. After them come Bertie, Edward, and Lady Jane. All characters cluster around Marreau}*

**Marreau:** Out! Out!! OUT!!! Marreau cannot investigate when the place is full of people. I

need room to exercise my little red cells.

*{All those who have just entered leave, except Marreau, Simpson & Gwendolyn.}*

**Simpson:** Grey, Marreau.

**Marreau:** What?

**Simpson:** Little grey cells, not red.

**Marreau:** Simpson, when you have seen as many brains as I have, you will agree that the little cells are definitely red.

**Simpson:** But ....

**Gwendolyn:** Don't bother Simpson. You should know by now that Monsieur Marreau is always right. Well, Marreau - who killed her, then?

**Marreau:** Killed? Oh you are suggesting that Lady Eustace's death was not an accident.

**Gwendolyn:** Come on, Marreau. You know that Lady Eustace is - was the President of the British Grouse Slayers Association, and abhorred all handguns, considering the shotgun to be the only decent weapon with which to despatch our fellow creatures. Why on earth should she be cleaning a revolver?

**Simpson:** Perhaps she was cleaning it for a friend.

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, Simpson. Very likely.

**Marreau:** Indeed, my dear Gwendolyn. You have followed my train of thought precisely. Lady Eustace was murdered - by somebody who owns - A REVOLVER!

**Gwendolyn:** Brilliant, Marreau. I don't know how you do it.

**Marreau:** Experience my dear Gwendolyn. Simply experience. That and.....

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, you've told us all that once already.

**Simpson:** Oh let him go on. I think he's dashed clever.

**Gwendolyn:** You would. Well how about it, Marreau? Who d'you reckon did it?

**Marreau:** Marreau does not jump to conclusions. She may have been cleaning it for a friend.

**Simpson:** I said that!

**Gwendolyn:** I give up! Look - let's examine the facts, Lady Eustace is shot at very close range with a revolver - a weapon she despises, and yet appears to have been cleaning. The Butler is not at all surprised to find her in possession of said revolv...

**Marreau:** *{Cutting in}* That is it! Of course! The Butler did it!

**Gwendolyn:** Hold on, Marreau. Don't you think we'd better ask him a few questions first?

**Marreau:** Yes, I will soon get him to admit that he is the murderer. The man has not yet been born who can outwit Hemlock Marreau.

**Gwendolyn:** *{under her breath}* Man, possibly not - Woman .....

**Marreau:** Simpson, go and fetch the rascal.

*{Simpson exits}*

**Gwendolyn:** I hope you'll be tactful.

**Marreau:** Marreau is the embodiment of tact. Discretion is my watchword.

*{Simpson re-enters with Cummings}*

**Cummings:** How can I help you, sir.

**Marreau:** You are perhaps not aware that I am Marreau...

**Simpson:** The great French detective.

**Gwendolyn:** Belgian.

**Marreau:** Luxembourg, actually.

**Cummings:** Yes sir, I have followed your cases with interest.

**Marreau:** You are no doubt aware then, that I always find the guilty party, no matter how cleverly they attempt to cover their tracks.

**Cummings:** *{nervously}* Yes Sir.

**Marreau:** Why did you kill Lady Eustace?

**Gwendolyn:** *{under her breath}* Very tactful!

**Cummings:** What?! I didn't!

**Marreau:** Yes you did. No point denying it. You shot her. Take him away Simpson.  
*{Simpson moves to grab Cummings}*

**Cummings:** But I was nowhere near her when she was shot.

**Marreau:** *{Sing-song voice}* Don't believe you!

*{Simpson tries to drag the struggling Cummings offstage.}*

**Gwendolyn:** Hold on Marreau. Simpson put him down. Could I ask a few questions?

**Marreau:** By all means - but it's pointless. He's as guilty as.....

*{Simpson releases Cummings.}*

**Gwendolyn:** Cummings, will you please explain what you were doing when Lady Eustace was shot?

**Cummings:** I was in the kitchen helping Mrs. Farley shell the peas.....

**Marreau:** Very likely.

**Cummings:** When all of a sudden we heard this shot. Mrs. Farley said, "What was that?", and I said, "Sounded like a shot to me", and then she said something about a rhetorical question, and said I'd better go and see what was going on.

**Gwendolyn:** Is it usual for you and Mrs. Farley to shell peas together at midnight?

**Cummings:** Er - well not usual, exactly, but we thought it would save some time in the morning.

**Gwendolyn:** I see. What did you do next?

**Cummings:** Well I dashed upstairs, and saw Daisy who was looking a bit dazed, and asked her if she'd heard the shot. She said she thought it had come from the gunroom.

**Simpson:** Good place for a shot to come from! What! Ha ha!

**Gwendolyn:** Shut up Simpson. Carry on Cummings.

**Cummings:** So I ran to the gunroom and there was Lady Eustace looking not at all well.

**Gwendolyn:** Not well?

**Cummings:** Well - dead really. Protheroe was examining her. She'd been shot with her revolver.

**Gwendolyn:** *{with emphasis}* HER revolver?

**Cummings:** Yes. Why?

**Gwendolyn:** It is a well-known fact that Lady Eustace considered revolvers to be the work of the Devil. Well? Can you explain?

**Cummings:** Ah! Yes, I'd forgotten that - dash it!

**Marreau:** So - I have found the flaw in your alibi.

**Gwendolyn:** You'd forgotten it. How long have you worked for Lady Eustace?

**Cummings:** Forty-two years. I know it sounds a bit unlikely for me to forget, but it was the heat of the moment. I just jumped to the wrong conclusion. What with all that gun cleaning equipment round her, and her holding the gun. I just put two and two together.

**Gwendolyn:** So what do you think now?

**Cummings:** I suppose someone shot her.

**Marreau:** And that someone was you!

**Cummings:** No. Mrs. Farley will back me up.

**Gwendolyn:** We will question Mrs. Farley later. Meanwhile you mustn't speak to her, or anyone else, about this matter. Go and do something in the Billiard Room. Go with him, Simpson, and then go and get Mrs. Farley.

*{Simpson and Cummings exit}*

**Marreau:** Open and shut case, really. No doubt about it.

**Gwendolyn:** Oh, yes? Who did it then?

**Marreau:** Well, Cummings, of course. Shelling peas indeed! You don't honestly think that

they'd be shelling peas in the middle of night - do you?

**Gwendolyn:** Of course they weren't.

**Marreau:** So he was shooting her.

**Gwendolyn:** *{laughs}* Lady Eustace? Not a chance.

**Marreau:** But...

*{Simpson re-enters with Mrs. Farley}*

**Gwendolyn:** Ah, Mrs. Farley. Do sit down.

**Marreau:** I am Hemlock Marreau

**Mrs. Farley:** The great Belgian detective?

**Gwendolyn:** Luxembourg.

**Marreau:** French, actually.

**Gwendolyn:** What were you doing when you heard the shot?

**Mrs. Farley:** I was preparing carrots with Mr. Cummings.

**Marreau:** *{going somewhat crazy}* Aha, now it is carrots. First it was peas, now it's carrots, next it'll be turnips, and we'll probably finish off with a couple of aubergines. Have you any other surprise vegetables which you intend to spring on us? Eh. Come-on. You cannot fool Marreau. Were you preparing any other vegetables for our delectation tomorrow?

**Mrs. Farley:** *{quaveringly}* Yes sir.

**Marreau:** Aha now we're getting to it. Well?

**Mrs. Farley:** Marrow.

**Marreau:** Yes! What? Come on - don't hide anything it's not worth it. What was this secretive vegetable....

**Mrs. Farley:** Marrow, that was the other vegetable.

**Marreau:** *{loosing all control}* WHAT WAS!!

**Gwendolyn:** Calm down Hemlock, the other vegetable was Marrow, you know long thick green thing. Rather nice stuffed with mincemeat, or served in cubes in an onion sauce.

**Marreau:** Ah. Sacre Bleu. Your stupid English Language. Fancy naming a vegetable after a great detective. Huh!

**Simpson:** I think the vegetable came first, Marreau.

**Gwendolyn:** Are you married, Mrs. Farley?

**Mrs. Farley:** I'm a widow.

**Gwendolyn:** And Mr. Cummings, is he married?

**Mrs. Farley:** No.

**Gwendolyn:** So there's no reason to hide the fact that you two are having an affair.

**Mrs. Farley:** No, but.. Oh, I didn't. Oh, I shouldn't have...

**Marreau:** But you did. So you are covering for Cummings with this imbecile story about the peas.

**Mrs. Farley:** Peas?

**Gwendolyn:** Carrots.

**Mrs. Farley:** Oh, did he say peas? I told him to say carrots.

**Marreau:** Well if that is not an admission of guilt I don't know what is. So you killed Lady Eustace, and have persuaded your lover, Cummings, to say he was shelling carrots with you - at midnight.

**Mrs. Farley:** No. Kill Lady Eustace, when our livelihoods depended on the old bag staying alive as long as possible!

**Simpson:** "The old bag"? I say, that's not a very nice way to talk about the deceased.

**Gwendolyn:** Why do you say that your livelihoods depended on her staying alive?

**Mrs. Farley:** Well, young Bertie stands to inherit the estate, and he has never liked either Clarence or myself.

**Marreau:** Clarence?

**Mrs. Farley:** Mr. Cummings. No, he's never liked us ever since we washed his mouth out with soap and water for calling Mr. Cummings an old .....

**Gwendolyn:** { *Cuts in* } I see. So in fact, neither of you had any motive for killing Lady Eustace, and in fact stood to lose by her death.

**Marreau:** So why did you make up the preposterous story about the peas?

**Gwendolyn:** I'll explain that to you later, Marreau. Mrs. Farley, did anyone, in your opinion, hold a grudge against her ladyship? Did anyone have a motive for killing her?

**Mrs. Farley:** I'd say they did.

**Marreau:** Who? Come-on! None of this loyalty-to-the-family business. Who had reason enough to - how you say - bump her off.

**Mrs. Farley:** All of them.

**Marreau and Simpson:** What?

**Mrs. Farley:** Oh yes. They all hated the old bag, but didn't dare cross her in case they got missed out of the will. But she just kept on hangin' on. The amount of times she avoided being blasted - accidentally like - when out on the shoots was legendary. Dr. Protheroe used to call her "The old cat" coz she'd got so many lives.

**Marreau:** Ah, but there is someone who is above suspicion - Dr. Protheroe. He couldn't stand to gain from the will - and had saved her life on a couple of occasions, or so I believe.

**Mrs. Farley:** Only coz she 'ad to. Would 'ave looked a bit fishy if she'd died of buckshot wounds to the bum - not usually fatal, you know! No, she had something on 'im as well. Don't know what it was, but she'd got summat on 'im.

**Marreau:** What about the others? Surely they didn't all have motives?

**Mrs. Farley:** Ev'ryone of 'em. Even little Jimmy.

**Simpson:** Little Jimmy? But he's only thirteen. What possible motive could a thirteen-year-old boy have for killing his grandmother?

**Mrs. Farley:** She strangled his pet hamster for one thing.

**Gwendolyn:** Oh, poor little Jimmy.

**Marreau:** Poor little 'amster! Why did she do that?

**Mrs. Farley:** Coz. 'is exercise wheel was making too much noise. And she used 'is rabbit for target practice.

**Marreau:** The monster. I am beginning to feel some sympathy for the murderer, especially if it was little Jimmy.

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, but as it is highly unlikely that little Jimmy did in fact **do** the murder - especially as he's in Switzerland at the moment. I think it might be more useful to find out the more likely candidates.

**Mrs. Farley:** *{happy to drop everybody in it}* Well as I said; Bertie stands to inherit the estate. Edward his younger brother will get MacTallach Castle in Scotland, Lady Jane will be free to marry her mystery lover...

**Simpson:** Hold on a moment. Who is this mystery lover?

**Mrs. Farley:** Well, if I knew that it wouldn't be a mystery. *{to Gwendolyn}* Is he a bit thick?

**Gwendolyn:** A lot, actually. Carry on, Mrs. Farley.

**Mrs. Farley:** Major Trubolt, her nephew, will probably get a good bit of money, which considering his gambling debts, could come in very useful.

**Simpson:** I say, I was in the army with Trubolt. The most upright upstanding character I've ever met. I never knew him to gamble, and he certainly wouldn't kill anyone - well, not without giving them a sporting chance to get him first.

**Gwendolyn:** How on earth did you get on in the army with your iffy stomach?

**Simpson:** I used to carry a lot of bicarb.

**Marreau:** We are straying from the subject. The little red cells are working overtime. Do not clutter my brain with inconsequentialities, or I am liable to start thinking that

bicarbonate of soda plays a crucial role in this murder.

**Gwendolyn:** You're right Marreau. We are wasting time. Somebody in this house murdered Lady Eustace, and ... by the way, the police are taking their time getting here.

**Simpson:** Police?

**Gwendolyn:** Yes, you know, tall men with pointy hats and dark blue suits.

**Simpson:** I wish you'd stop talking to me like I was an idiot Gwendolyn. I do know what a policeman looks like. I just wondered what the police had got to do with it.

**Gwendolyn:** The reason I talk to you like you were an idiot is because you are an idiot. Someone has been murdered by having their nose, and other useful bits of their head shot off. This, like it or not, is usually considered to be the sort of thing the Police like to be told about. Now presumably someone has phoned the local Police station, and a bicycle is hurrying at this very moment to the scene - correct?

**Simpson:** Well, no, they haven't got a phone. Or to be more precise, they have got a phone, but it isn't working. In fact, the phone probably is working, but the lines have been cut.

**Marreau:** You thought this piece of information too trivial to tell us before, no doubt?

**Simpson:** I forgot. Dash it all, Marreau, a chap can't be expected to remember everything.

**Gwendolyn:** Your name appears to be the limit of your ability.

**Simpson:** Gwenders...

**Gwendolyn:** And don't call me Gwenders! Gwend is bad enough, but Gwenders - ugh.

**Marreau:** Well, Mrs. Farley, you've been very helpful. I think you can go now. Would you ask Daisy to come in please..

*{Mrs. F. exits}*

**Simpson:** Sorry, Marreau. Should have thought.

**Gwendolyn:** We don't ask the impossible, Simpson. Relaying the piece of information would have been quite sufficient. No need for any thought processes to be involved.

**Simpson:** I'm going to go home in a minute! I'm doing my best!

**Gwendolyn:** Heaven help us if you ever do your worst.

**Simpson:** Tell her to stop picking on me Marreau, will you?

**Marreau:** Yes Gwendolyn, leave him alone. He can't help it if he has the brainpower normally associated with the simpler fungi.

**Simpson:** Marreau, I'm hurt.

**Marreau:** Well get in your little car and point it in the direction of the nearest town and see if you can locate a policeman

**Gwendolyn:** *{teasingly}* There's a good mushroom.

**Marreau:** Tell him what has happened, and inform him The Great Marreau is on the job!

**Simpson:** Oh, alright. Good thing I can drive, what.

**Marreu and Gwendolyn:** Um.

**Marreau:** And pick up a packet of boiled sweets in the village, would you?

**Simpson:** Righty-ho!

*{Simpson exits}*

**Gwendolyn:** You shouldn't have said that, Marreau.

**Marreau:** I know. I was a bit harsh on him.

**Gwendolyn:** No, not that. You shouldn't have asked him to get the boiled sweets. He'll probably tell the woman at the corner shop about the murder, and buy half a pound of chocolate policemen.

**Marreau:** Oh, he wouldn't would he?

**Gwendolyn:** He would.

**Marreau:** He might. Oh well, we'll see what happens. By the time the police arrive I should have this case all sewn up.

**Gwendolyn:** With Simpson getting the police....Besides, where d'you expect him to get boiled sweets from at one o'clock in the morning?

**Marreau:** Ah. I hadn't thought of that.

*{Daisy (the maid) enters}*

**Marreau:** Come in, Daisy. Don't be frightened. There's nothing to worry about, provided you didn't murder her ladyship.

**Daisy:** *{fast & flustered but intelligible}* I didn't. I never. Honest. I wasn't there. I didn't see nuffink. He's lying if 'e said I did. I didn't kill 'er. I know 'e saw me touch the gun but I just touched it see. I didn't shoot it. Honest. It wasn't me. I don't know who it was. I didn't see him. Well only 'is back. And not for long. Just comin' out the room 'e was. I couldn't say as 'e did it. Well not for sure. Though it was 'is back and I....

**Gwendolyn:** Whose back Daisy?

**Marreau:** Cummings?

**Daisy:** Cummings? No. Master Ed .....

**Gwendolyn:** Master Edward?

**Daisy:** I only saw 'is back, could a been anyone, but it was 'is jacket alright.

**Marreau:** Master Edward, hey. Well that confirms my suspicions. I think we'd better have a word with that young man. Just one more question, Daisy. Where did Cummings come from after the shot was fired?

**Daisy:** Up the stairs from the kitchen. He comes rushing up and asks me where the shot came from, and I told 'im the gunroom, and he went running off to find the body.

**Gwendolyn:** Alright. Thank-you, Daisy. Oh - you say you recognized Master Edward's jacket. What does it look like?

**Daisy:** Oh it's a sort-of blazer thing. Dark blue wiv thin red stripes down it. I'd recognize it anywhere. Can I go now?

**Gwendolyn:** Yes. Thank-you Daisy. You've been very helpful.

**Marreau:** Time for a word with Master Edward, I think.

**Gwendolyn:** In the morning, Marreau. I'm whacked.

**Marreau:** Very well. I will recharge my little red cells. Early start though.

*{Lights down}*

## Act I Scene 2

*Scene: The same. Lights rise. Master Edward is sitting nervously on the edge of his seat. Gwendolyn is also seated but is far more relaxed. Marreau is pacing. It is early morning. Edward is affable, upper class, and not very bright.*

**Marreau:** So you claim that your jacket has been missing for several days.

**Edward:** Er-yes, Tuesday I think I last saw it. Can't be sure. But I certainly haven't worn it in the last couple of days.

**Marreau:** Very convenient. Do your clothes often go missing? For instance, is there any other item which has mysteriously vanished in the last few weeks?

**Edward:** Funny you should say that ...

**Marreau:** Oh Yes?

**Edward:** Yes - I couldn't find one of my socks this morning. Hunted high and low for the blessed thing. Not a sign.

**Marreau:** You have the other one, however?

**Edward:** Oh, yes.

**Marreau:** Well, to be honest, I am inclined not to suspect foul play in the case of the missing sock! Unless, of course, our murderer is a unidexter. *{Marreau chuckles to himself}*

**Edward:** A what?

**Gwendolyn:** One-legged. You must excuse Monsieur Marreau's occasionally florid language - He is French.

**Marreau:** Belgian, actually.

**Gwendolyn:** {sighs} Belgian. My mistake. I believe you stand to inherit MacTallach castle now that her ladyship is no longer with us.

**Edward:** Yes. Crumbling old pile it is, too. Nothing but ghosts and draughts. It's about as inviting as the Bastille. Isabel won't go near the place. Gives her the creeps. Mind you, most things give Isabel the creeps, this murder's sent her doo-lally.

**Gwendolyn:** How long have you been married to Isabel?

**Edward:** We married last year, actually. Mother never liked her very much. Refused to have her on the shoots. I think it was the way she squeaked every time the guns went off that really annoyed her. Bang - squeak. Bang - squeak. It **was** pretty annoying, I must say. Used to throw the pointers completely. There they were front paw raised, nose pointing compass-like to the quarry and - squeak - threw them completely - thought it was a rat, I suppose.

**Marreau:** Very interesting, I'm sure, but not really apposite to our enquiries.

**Edward:** No, sorry. I hope you find the boulder that got Mother. I mean, I know we had our differences and all that, but you can't have people going round bagging grannies just because they're objectionable old battle-axes. And I was rather fond of the old thing, really. Sort of fixture and fitting. Place certainly won't be the same without her.

**Gwendolyn:** Who do you think did it.

**Edward:** Oh Gosh, now you're asking? Wouldn't like to say really. Even little Jimmy had a motive.

**Marreau:** Yes we have 'eard about the 'amster

**Edward:** {mimicking the accent} The 'amster? Oh no, I'd forgotten about that. No, I was thinking about the way she packs him off to Switzerland to climb mountains when the poor lad's terrified of heights!

**Gwendolyn:** As a matter of interest, whose child is Jimmy?

**Edward:** Ah, sore point there. Bit of a skeleton, really.

**Gwendolyn:** Oh?

**Edward:** Yes. Well, I suppose you'd find out one way or another. Jane had a secret affair with an older man when she was seventeen. Little Jimmy was the result. She's always refused to say who the man was. But I have my suspicions that Mother knew his identity. Though I haven't the foggiest.

**Marreau:** I see. And this mystery man was never heard of again?

**Edward:** Well, no, but again I think that was Mother's doing. I believe Jane and the man were rather keen to set-up-shop, so to speak.

**Gwendolyn:** Is this mystery man the same mystery man who is now her mystery lover?

**Edward:** I don't know. It's all a bit of a mystery to me.

**Marreau:** Thank-you Master Edward. {throwing this line away} Oh, you realise of course

that at the moment you are the prime suspect, so don't go doing anything rash like.....

**Edward:** *{his affable character changing suddenly}* What! Me - Suspect?

**Marreau:** Yes of course. Someone about your size, wearing your jacket, hurrying from the scene of the crime. Bit damning really. Wouldn't you say?

**Edward:** But this is preposterous. I was nowhere near when she was shot.

**Marreau:** Nothing involving vegetables, I hope.

**Edward:** What? No I - I was, um, I was having a bath, that's right.

**Marreau:** Any witnesses?

**Edward:** I beg your pardon!

**Marreau:** Did anyone see you taking a bath?

**Edward:** I should dashed-well hope not! Isabel was in the next room though. She'd have heard me splashing about, I suppose.

**Marreau:** Fine, well you've been very helpful. Be a good fellow and don't talk to anyone about this. Go and do something in the Billiard Room, would you?

*{Marreau ushers the somewhat bemused Edward out of the door}*

**Gwendolyn:** *{contemplatively}* Um.

**Marreau:** What do you mean "Um"?

**Gwendolyn:** He's hiding something.

**Marreau:** Is he?

**Gwendolyn:** Yes. I think we ought to see Isabel and then have another word with him.

**Marreau:** Absolutely. Just what I was going to suggest. Pop and get her would you?  
*{Gwendolyn exits leaving Marreau alone}*

**Marreau:** *{thinking aloud}* Think, Marreau. What's the link?*{slowly}* Revolver, hamster, chocolate policemen, bicarbonate of soda.

*{Vincent the Valet enters half-way through the foregoing line}*

**Vincent:** Bicarbonate of soda, sir? Stomach a bit dicky, is it? I'll go and get you some.

**Marreau:** No-no-no, I was simply using my vast experience in the field of criminal methodology to discover the perpetrator of this fiendish murder.

**Vincent:** Oh, very good sir. Can I get you anything?

**Marreau:** No. Yes, actually, you could get me some bicarbonate of soda. My stomach's a bit - how you say - dicky.

**Vincent:** *{Vincent looks heaven-ward}* Very good, sir. Will there be anything else?

**Marreau:** No that'll be all for now.

*{Vincent exits, Gwendolyn re-enters, with an agitated Isabel in tow}*

**Marreau:** *{Marreau suddenly goes starry-eyed}* Ah Madame Isabel. Enchante'. *{He kisses her}*

**Isabel:** *{Kittenish}* Monsieur Marreau, we meet again.

**Gwendolyn:** *{to herself}* What?

**Marreau:** Sit down ma cherie, I am sorry that this terrible business has upset you so.

**Gwendolyn:** *{amazed}* Marreau?!

**Marreau:** *{ignoring Gwendolyn}* Now my dear, I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you a few rather unpleasant questions.

**Gwendolyn:** *{indignant}* MARREAU!! *{She grabs Marreau's arm}*

**Marreau:** *{to Isabel}* Excuse me a moment, my dear. *{He goes to one side with Gwendolyn. From this point, to each other in stage whispers.}* Yes. What is it? Do you not see that I am engaged in questioning this lady?

**Gwendolyn:** Do you know her?

**Marreau:** *{with French suavity}* Well, you know, we have met.

**Gwendolyn:** Met? Do you not think it would be better if I were to question her?

**Marreau:** You? Why, I am the Great Marreau, I do not have my secretary asking questions on my behalf.

**Gwendolyn:** Cut it out Marreau. You know I solve all your cases for you!

**Marreau:** WHAT!! I shall speak to you later! Now kindly let me get on with my investigation.

*{Breaks away from Gwendolyn and returns to Isabel}*

**Gwendolyn:** *{fuming}* Speak to me later. Hmph!

**Marreau:** I'm sorry about that. Now as I was saying I'm going to have to ask you some rather distressing questions...

**Isabel:** I know you will be as gentle with me as you can.

**Gwendolyn:** Yughk!

**Marreau:** Now then. When Lady Eustace tragically met her death, if it's not too distressing for you.....

**Gwendolyn:** Get on with it, Marreau. *{To Isabel}* What were you doing when she was shot?

**Isabel:** Oh I was, er, I was having a bath.

**Gwendolyn:** That must have been cosy for you.

**Marreau:** Gwendolyn!

**Isabel:** I don't understand - I...

**Marreau:** What my secretary is referring to is the fact that Master Edward said he was having a bath when the shot was fired.

**Isabel:** Ah yes that's right, he was. I'd had my bath and was getting ready for bed. I remember hearing him splashing about after I heard the shot.

**Marreau:** Good, well I think that's all I need to know from you, my dear, sorry to...

**Gwendolyn:** Hold on, Marreau. I would like to ask a few questions...

**Marreau:** Oh, very well

**Gwendolyn:** After you heard the shot, what did you do?

**Isabel:** Oh, I think I called through the door to Edward, "What was that?"

**Gwendolyn:** Was that a rhetorical question?

**Isabel:** Sorry?

**Gwendolyn:** Did you in fact know that it was a shot?

**Isabel:** Well it sounded like one to me.

**Gwendolyn:** And what did Master Edward say?

**Isabel:** I wish people would stop calling him MASTER Edward. He is forty three and married - to me.

**Gwendolyn:** Please answer my question. What did he say in reply?

**Isabel:** He didn't.

**Gwendolyn:** Oh?

**Isabel:** Yes, the bath water was running. I suppose he couldn't hear me.

**Gwendolyn:** So what did happen next?

**Isabel:** Well, I heard a lot of running about downstairs, and cries of, "Up her nose" and the like, and assumed something rather nasty had happened. And then Edward came out of the bathroom in his dressing robe and said he'd go downstairs and find out what was going on.

**Gwendolyn:** And what did you do?

**Isabel:** Oh, I got dressed and followed him down. Unfortunately I saw the body and...  
{gulps} Oh it was horrible - and I broke down I'm afraid. I can't really remember much after that.

{She breaks down again}

**Gwendolyn:** Alright. Thank-you very much. {Marreau comes over to Isabel.}

**Marreau:** I am sorry that we have caused you so much distress. {He shows her to the door. Isabel exits.} Did you have to make her go through all that? She was very upset.

**Gwendolyn:** She was also lying. And so is he.

**Marreau:** What?

**Gwendolyn:** When Master Edward came into this room, not five minutes after the shot was fired, he was fully dressed.

**Marreau:** You are right. So Master Edward did it, and his courageous wife is standing by her husband!

**Gwendolyn:** *{virtually ignoring Marreau}* However, it's such a fundamental mistake that I think they're hiding something else. There's certainly something fishy going on.

**Marreau:** So where does that leave us?

*{There is the sound of something being knocked over offstage, and a cry of "Oops", Marreau & Gwendolyn look at each other and then at the door. Simpson enters.}*

**Simpson:** Dashed silly place to put an umbrella stand. Hello all. Solved it yet, Marreau?

**Gwendolyn:** Have you brought the police?

**Simpson:** Police?

**Gwendolyn:** Oh No! I knew it!

**Simpson:** Oh no, he's on his way. Cycling over here as fast as he can. You've got to hand it to...

**Marreau:** Cycling? Why did you not bring him in your car?

**Simpson:** Oh, Gosh, Never thought of that - Sorry.

**Gwendolyn:** You complete .... Oh, never mind. I suppose he'll get here eventually.

**Simpson:** *{Proffering paper bag}* Care for a chocolate policeman?

*{A BLOODCURDLING SCREAM IS HEARD OFFSTAGE}*

**Marreau:** What was that?

**Simpson:** Sounded like a bloodcurdling scream to me

**Marreau:** Yes indeed. And from the pitch and duration, I should say that we will find that Master Edward has been impaled on a croquet mallet.

**Simpson:** Oh, come on, Marreau. Don't be ridiculous. Not even *you* can detect that sort of detail.

**Marreau:** I will have you know that I have studied.....

*{Cummings rushes in}*

**Cummings:** Oh it's horrible! Horrible!

**Gwendolyn:** What is it, Cummings?

**Cummings:** Master Edward.

*{Gwendolyn and Simpson look at Marreau.}*

**Marreau:** Yes, go on Cummings.

**Cummings:** He's been impaled on a croquet mallet.

**Gwendolyn and Simpson:** What?

*{Simpson dives behind the aspidistra}*

**Marreau:** Told-you-so.

**Gwendolyn:** I'm impressed, Marreau.

**Marreau:** And so is he, it would appear.

**Gwendolyn:** That pun was in rather bad taste, Marreau.

**Marreau:** Murder is in rather bad taste, my dear. I will go and inspect the body.  
*{Marreau exits}*

**Simpson:** Well, Gwendy, what's been happening.

**Gwendolyn:** Gwendy? Gwend is bad. Gwenders is worse. Gwendy I will not stand for. Listen Simpson. My name is Gwendolyn Bayne. If Gwendolyn is too taxing for you then call me Miss Bayne. In fact I would prefer it if you didn't call me anything.

**Simpson:** Sorry, Gwenders.

**Gwendolyn:** *{exasperated noise}*

**Simpson:** Ah, Sorry. Gwendolyn. Anyway, what's been going on?

**Gwendolyn:** There are a lot of people here who are lying very unconvincingly.

**Simpson:** And some who are lying about very dead.

**Gwendolyn:** True. I wonder who will be next.

**Simpson:** Next? You think he'll strike again?

**Gwendolyn:** Or she!

**Simpson:** Good grief. You don't think it could be a woman doing this, surely.

**Gwendolyn:** Well, I had my suspicions, but if Master Edward really has been impaled on a croquet mallet, then she'd have to be pretty strong.

**Simpson:** I suppose it might have been an accident.

**Gwendolyn:** *{Looks at Simpson as though he is a Martian. After a considerable pause.}* I don't suppose you'd like to paint the scenario, whereby a middle-aged man accidentally impales himself on a croquet mallet, would you?

**Simpson:** Well; he might have been running along hell-for-leather with his mallet, tripped, and "blurk", so to speak.

**Gwendolyn:** *{Sarcastically}* Yes, of course, why didn't I think of that, I'd forgotten how fast

you have to run in Croquet.

**Simpson:** Just an idea.

*{Marreau re-enters, thoughtfully}*

**Marreau:** Very unpleasant. Very unpleasant indeed.

**Simpson:** How did it happen Marreau?

**Marreau:** It would appear that he was running along, tripped and "blurk".

**Gwendolyn:** I give up! Call me if anything vaguely realistic happens, would you.  
*{Gwendolyn exits, moodily}*

**Marreau:** What has got into her? She's been in a funny mood all day.

**Simpson:** Don't know, Marreau.

*{Cummings appears at the door, unseen by Marreau or Simpson.}*

**Marreau:** I'm going to have another look at the scene of the accident. Coming?

**Cummings:** Yes, Sir.

*{Marreau & Simpson look/wheel round to look at Cummings.}*

**Marreau:** What?

**Cummings:** I thought you wanted me, sir.

**Marreau:** No. When I want you, I will call you.

**Cummings:** Very good, sir.*{under his breath}* Stupid French...*{turns and exits.}*

**Marreau:** Come along, Simpson, time to use the little red cells, I think.

*{Fade lights / Curtain}*

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