

poles. Max grins at the audience; Robert and Dennis quickly lower him out of view. Max stands up in the window and grins at the audience again. Robert grabs him and pulls him out of sight; Max smacks his head on the edge of the window as he goes.

ANNIE. Oh Inspector, my fiancé and my lover killed on the same eve.

CHRIS. Remember your breathing, Miss Colleymoore, now is not the time for another of your episodes.

ANNIE. *(Calm.)* I am having an episode, Inspector. I cannot help it.

CHRIS. *(Under his breath.)* Have an episode. Have...an...episode. *(Loudly.)* Have an episode.

Annie tries to scream and shake as she has seen Sandra do in rehearsals. Vamp. Annie builds the episode bigger and bigger until it reaches a climax and she flops onto the chaise longue.

No, Miss Colleymoore.

Robert and Dennis reenter.

ROBERT. Florence, control yourself girl.

DENNIS. She's having another one of her hysterical episodes.

ANNIE. *(Calmly reads.)* They're dead. They're gone and they're never coming back.

ROBERT. I will not tolerate another tantrum, Florence.

ANNIE. *(Calm.)* Get away from me, Thomas. You don't understand my grief.

ROBERT. That's enough, take one of your pills.

ANNIE. No. Not more pills.

Annie takes a pill with no hesitation.

Oh, they're mints.

ROBERT. But who could have killed...

Annie upstages Robert by sinking back onto the chaise longue, pretending to be knocked out by the pill.

But who could have killed him?

DENNIS. That's a good question, Mr. Colleymoore.

CHRIS. ...and one we need to answer quickly if we're going to get out of this house alive.

ANNIE. Oh Inspector, you've given me a chill.

CHRIS. Perkins, pour us all another scotch.

DENNIS. Of course, Inspector.

Dennis pours more white spirit for everyone.

CHRIS. Now, tell me, is there anyone else that you know of in the grounds other than the four of us?

ANNIE. Not a soul.

ROBERT. The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. *(Drinks and spits out the white spirit.)* Good God, I needed that.

CHRIS. Does anyone have access to the grounds?

ANNIE. No one, Inspector.

DENNIS. I'm the only one with a master key and as instructed I locked and bolted the doors as soon as you arrived.

ROBERT. Then who could have killed him?

DENNIS. That's a good question, Mr. Colleymoore.

CHRIS. ...and one we need to answer quickly if we're going to get out of this house alive.

ANNIE. Oh Inspector, you've given me a chill.

CHRIS. Perkins, pour us all another scotch.

Chris and Robert start to realise that they have been here before.

DENNIS. Of course, Inspector.

Dennis pours white spirit again.

CHRIS. Now, tell me, is there anyone else that you know of in the grounds other than the four of us?

ANNIE. Not a soul.

ROBERT. The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. *(Drinks. Spits it out again.)* Good God, I needed that.

CHRIS. Does anyone have access to the grounds?

ANNIE. No one, Inspector.

DENNIS. I'm the only one with a master key and as instructed I locked and bolted the doors as soon as you arrived.

ROBERT. (*Pointedly, hoping Dennis will say the correct line this time.*) Then who could have killed him?

Dennis knows something is wrong but not what, and the loop of dialogue goes around again.

DENNIS. That's a good question, Mr. Colley Moore.

CHRIS. ...and one we need to answer quickly if we're going to get out of this house alive.

ANNIE. Oh Inspector, you've given me a chill.

CHRIS. Perkins, pour us all another scotch.

DENNIS. Of course, Inspector.

Dennis pours white spirit again.

CHRIS. Now, tell me, is there anyone else that you know of in the grounds other than the four of us?

ANNIE. Not a soul.

ROBERT. The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. (*Drinks. Spits.*) Good God, I needed that.

CHRIS. Does anyone have access to the grounds?

ANNIE. No one, Inspector.

DENNIS. I'm the only one with the master key and as instructed I locked and bolted all the doors as soon as you arrived.

ROBERT. *Then who could have killed him?*

Pause. All look at Dennis.

DENNIS. That's a good question, Mr. Colley Moore.

The script loops again. Much faster this time.

CHRIS. ...and one we need to answer quickly if we're going to get out of this house alive.

ANNIE. Oh Inspector, you've given me a chill!

CHRIS. Perkins, pour us all another scotch.

DENNIS. Of course, Inspector.

Dennis pours white spirit again.

CHRIS. Now, tell me, is there anyone else that you know of in the grounds other than the four of us?

ANNIE. Not a soul.

ROBERT. The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. (*Drinks again. Spits out again.*) Good God, I needed that.

CHRIS. Does anyone have access to the grounds?

ANNIE. No one, Inspector.

DENNIS. I'm the only one with a master key and as instructed I locked and bolted the doors as soon as you arrived.

ROBERT. *THEN WHO COULD HAVE KILLED HIM?*

Pause. Tense, everyone desperate that Dennis will get it right this time.

DENNIS. That's a good question, Mr. Colley Moore.

ROBERT and CHRIS. *Argh!!*

CHRIS. ...and one we need to answer quickly if we're going to get out of this house alive.

ANNIE. Oh Inspector, you've given me a chill.

CHRIS. Perkins, pour us all another scotch.

DENNIS. Of course, Inspector.

Dennis pours white spirit again.

CHRIS. Now, tell me, is there anyone else that you know of in the grounds other than the four of us?

ANNIE. Not a soul.

ROBERT. The gardener left at six, the only other member of staff is Perkins. (*Throws the white spirit in Dennis' face.*) Good God, I needed that!

Chris throws his white spirit in Dennis' face as well.

CHRIS. Does anyone have access to the grounds?

ANNIE. No one, Inspector.

DENNIS. (*In pain, the white spirit burning his skin.*) I'm the only one with a master key and as instructed I locked and bolted all the doors as soon as you arrived.

Chris and Robert grab Dennis.

ALL. Then who could have killed him?

DENNIS. (*Realises.*) No one! YES! No one could have killed him, except for the people who are in this room.

CHRIS. Good God, you're right, it's one of us.

All gasp.

ANNIE. (*Reads.*) This is a disaster! Blackout. Intermission.

Annie realises her mistake.

Oh.

Blackout. Tabs fly in. Music.

End of Act One

INTERVAL ACTIVITY:

Robert appears in auditorium/foyer in a robe and joins the queue for ice creams. Chris appears and sends him backstage.