

The Real Inspector Calls Extract; Mrs Trudge answers the phone

Mrs T: Hello? The drawing room of Mr Arthur Sterling's Yorkshire residence one foggy evening sometime in the year 1912? *(pause)* Hello? The drawing room – who? *(pause)* I'm afraid there is no-one of that name here, this is all very mysterious and I'm sure it's leading up to something. I do hope nothing is amiss for we – that is, newspaper magnate Mr Sterling, his wife Sybil, hard-drinking son Eric and their guests, who include Sir Magnus and Lady Beth Macbeth, an enigmatic couple from Canada via Scotland – are gathered together to celebrate the engagement of their daughter Sheila to Mr Gerard Cross, the son of a newspaper proprietor. *(pause)* What? No, I'm Mrs Trudge the housekeeper who is fiercely loyal to the Sterling family and would go to great lengths to ensure they did not come to any harm – and who keeps an eye on everything, including the changeable local weather. The fog is very treacherous around here – it rolls in over the Moors without warning, shrouding the mansion in a deadly mantle of blind man's buff. *(pause)* Yes. Should a stranger enter our midst, which I very much doubt, I will tell him you called. Goodbye.

Next we hear the welcoming speech of pompous patriarch Arthur Sterling.

Arthur's speech – Arthur, Eric, Sheila, Gerard, Sybil, Magnus, Beth

Arthur I don't often make speeches...

Eric *(under his breath)* That anyone listens to.

Arthur ...but tonight I make an exception. Are you listening, Sheila?

Sheila Actually, no.

Arthur Gerard, this daughter of mine is a frisky one with a wonderful sense of humour – always larking about. I'm delighted about this engagement and how it will bring our two enterprises together. As a press magnate...

Eric *(under his breath)* More like a fridge magnate

Arthur ...it warms my heart to think that our Ridings Reveille and your Moorland Mercury might soon merge and conjoin

Sybil Arthur, language!

Sheila It's Gerard and me who are supposed to be conjoining, not your silly newsrags.

Gerard True, my dear, but listen to your father.

Arthur And I trust you will soon be married. In this, the thirteenth year of the new century, it is a propiscous, er prospistus...a good and proper time to get wed. Ignore all this pessimistic talk. After that business with the Boers, this country's done with wars on foreign shores. Aeroplanes? Trust me, that's an enterprise that will never take off. Put all your money into shipping if you want to keep afloat.

Sheila Daddy, this is an engagement party, not a shareholders' meeting.

Arthur Ah, but you can always mix business with pleasure. (That's why I married your mother). I'm just saying it's a good time to get married. Stocks and shares are soaring – take my tip and invest in the White Star Line – they'll never go down! With Asquith in power, we're sure of peace and prosperity for decades to come. Now I'd like to welcome our foreign guests. Sheila tells me that, Sir Magnus, and Lady Beth, you are over here from Canada and that you enjoy, ahem, uncommon wealth.

Magnus Most droll.

Beth What a wit!

Eric Not everything is about money, father.

Arthur But you're damned quick to spend it, aren't you, my lad! As I was saying, you are very welcome, even though I haven't got the foggiest why Sheila invited you.

Magnus How kind.

Beth Charmed, I'm sure.

Arthur But this could be a fortuitate, er fortuninous, er fortunate affair since, I too am hoping to become a knight of the realm for my services to economic well-being in managing to keep the Ridings Reveille's presses rolling despite the ludicrous demands of our cosseted and overpaid journalists and theatre critics...

Sybil (*Loudly*) Arthur, watch your mouth! Er, language.

Arthur Just as long as we avoid any significant scandals, it's in the bag!

(Ellen) ... and finally, the inspector arrives...

The arrival of Inspector Pound

Inspector My name is In-spectre Calls, er Goole, er Hound, er ...what's your name, sir?

Arthur Sterling.

Inspector Ah, that's it! Pound, Sterling. I am the real Inspector Pound.

ALL Yes.

Inspector I'd like some information. Why on earth am I here, for example?

ALL Yes.

Inspector Oh yes. But two hours ago, as you say in your quaint early twentieth century parlance, a beautiful young woman died in the Infirmary. It seems that, amongst other things, she'd swallowed some disinfectant. Killed ninety-nine percent of her household germs before doing away with her too. Now she's completely Domesto-cated.

ALL Suicide?

Inspector Possibly. But all my uncannily prescient instincts hint at...murder most foul! You're all probably wondering what this has got to do with you.

ALL Yes.

Inspector I've been rummaging around in this young lady's drawers. And in her most secret compartment of all I discovered her secret diary and a series of rather incriminating photographs. I have a picture of the young lady here before she died a most horrible, lingering death. Would you like to see it?

ALL Yes.

They all look at the picture in turn. All looked shocked because they recognise her – and they all look rather guilty, too.

Inspector This intriguing, young and formerly beautiful young woman went by a number of different names, as will be revealed. She had her reasons. Before we go any further, do any of you know her?

ALL *(Vigorously shaking heads)* No!

Inspector That is the last lie any of you will tell, unless you have something to hide. *(Turns to audience)* Ladies and gentlemen, we don't believe them, do we? I call upon all of you here present to assist me in my no-stone-to-be-unturned investigations. All but the murderer will now be obliged to tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so be certain to probe them to the full.