

## **Towards Zero Audition Sides**

### **NEVILE STRANGE**

**NEVILE.** Well, I happened to run across Audrey in London, quite by chance, and she was awfully nice about things—didn't seem to bear any malice or anything like that. While I was talking to her the idea came to me—how sensible it would be if— if she and Kay could be friends—if we could all get together. And it seemed to me that this was the place where it could happen quite naturally. Oh yes, it was all my idea. And Audrey seemed quite pleased and ready to try. I had a spot of bother with Kay. I can't think why—I mean, if anyone were going to object, you'd think it would be Audrey. I suppose I'd better go and make my peace with Kay. I really can't see though why she has to fly off the handle like this. Audrey might very well be jealous of her, but I can't see why she should be jealous of Audrey. Can you?

### **AUDREY STRANGE**

**AUDREY.** Oh, Thomas, you look just the same as when we last met—pipe and all. I am so glad you've come back. Now, at last, I can talk to someone. Thomas, there's something wrong. Something's changed about this place. Ever since I arrived, I've felt there was something not quite right. Don't you feel there's something different? No, how can you? You've only just come. The only person who doesn't seem to feel it is Nevile.

### **KAY STRANGE**

**KAY.** You're all on her side—all of you! You'd like to see Nevile go back to Audrey. I'm the interloper, I don't belong. Nevile said so last night and he was right. Camilla's always disliked me, she's put up with me for Nevile's sake. I'm supposed to see everyone's point of view but my own. What I feel or think doesn't matter. If my life is all smashed up it's just too bad, but it doesn't matter. It's only Audrey who matters. Well, she's not going to smash up my life! I don't care what I do to stop it, but I will. I'll make it impossible for Nevile to go back to her.

## **TED LATIMER**

**TED.** You and I, Miss Aldin, seem to be the odd men out. We must console each other. One conjugal reconciliation in the rose garden, one faithful swain nerving himself to pop the question. Where do we come in? Nowhere. We're the outsiders. Here's to the outsiders. And to hell with all those inside the ringed fence.

## **THOMAS ROYDE**

**ROYDE.** I've been reading a detective story. Not very good. Always seems to me these yarns begin in the wrong place. Begin with the murder. But the murder's not really the beginning. As I see it, the murder is at the end of the story. I mean, the real story begins long before—years before, sometimes. Must do. All the causes and events that bring the people concerned to a certain place, on a certain day, at a certain time. And then, over the top—zero hour. Not very good at explaining myself, I'm afraid.

## **LADY TRESSILIAN**

**LADY TRESSILIAN.** If I had been true to my principles I should have refused to receive them here. I've accepted Kay as Nevile's wife, though I shall never really like her. But I must say, I was dumbfounded and very much upset when Nevile wrote asking if he could come home with Kay, under the pretext if you please, that it would be nice if Audrey and Kay could be friends. Friends! I said I couldn't entertain such a suggestion for a moment, and that it would be very painful for Audrey. He replied that he had already consulted Audrey and she thought it was a good idea. But Audrey is obviously embarrassed and unhappy. If you ask me, it's just Nevile being like Henry the Eighth. Conscience. Nevile feels guilty about Audrey and is trying to justify himself.

## MARY ALDIN

**MARY.** I'm all right. I just feel a little dizzy still. I had to come. They told me something about your suspecting Nevile. But it can't have been Nevile. I had to come and tell you. Whoever did it, it wasn't Neville. That I know. My bell rang, you see. I was terribly sleepy. I could only just get up. It was a minute or two before half past ten. As I came out of my room Nevile was in the hall below. I looked over the banisters and saw him. He went out of the front door and slammed it behind him. Then I went in to check on Lady Tressilian. She said—oh dear, what did she say? She said, "Did I ring for you? I can't remember doing so. Nevile has behaved very badly, losing his temper, shouting at me, I feel most upset." I gave her some aspirin and some hot milk from the thermos and she settled down. Then I went back to bed. I was desperately sleepy.

## SUPERINTENDENT BATTLE

**BATTLE.** I think that this crime was directed against you, Mr. Strange. I asked you yesterday who hated you. The answer, I think, is Audrey Strange. Ever since you left her for another woman, Audrey Strange has been brooding over her hatred of you. In my opinion—and strictly off the record—I think she's become mentally unbalanced. Killing you wasn't enough to justify her hate. She decided to get you hanged for murder. She wore your dinner jacket, she planted your niblick, smearing it with Lady Tressilian's blood and hair. The only thing that saved you was something she couldn't foresee. Lady Tressilian rang her bell for Miss Aldin after you left. It's not my business to argue with you, Mr. Strange. I asked for a word in private because I wanted to prepare you for what's about to happen.

## MATHEW TREVES

**TREVES.** Mr. Royde said something to me the other day, Battle, that I've thought about a great deal since. Yes, Thomas. You were talking about a detective story you were reading. You said that they begin in the wrong place. The murder should not be the beginning of the story but the end. And, of course, you were quite right. A murder is the culmination of a lot of different circumstances, all converging at a given point. Rather fancifully, you called it zero hour. It is not exactly Lady Tressilian's murder that I am talking about now. There are different kinds of murder. Superintendent Battle, when I put it to you, will you allow that all the evidence against Audrey Strange could have been faked?

## **INSPECTOR LEACH**

**LEACH.** I say, take a look at this. Pollock has just found it bundled down in the bottom of Neville Strange's wardrobe. Look at these stains. That's blood, or I'm Marilyn Monroe.

**BATTLE.** You're certainly not Marilyn Monroe, Jim. It's spattered all up the sleeve as well. Any other suits in the room?

**LEACH.** Dark grey pinstripe hanging over a chair. And there's a lot of water round the wash basin on the floor—quite a pool of it. Looks as if it had slopped over.

**BATTLE.** Such as might have been made if he'd washed the blood off his hands in the devil of a hurry, eh?

**LEACH.** Yes.

**BATTLE.** Hairs! A woman's fair hair on the inside of the collar.

**LEACH.** Some on the sleeve, too.

**BATTLE.** Red ones, these. Mr. Strange seems to have had his arm round one wife and the other one's head on his shoulder.

**LEACH.** Quite a Mormon. Looks bad for him, don't it?

**BATTLE.** We'll have to have the blood on this tested later to see if it's the same group as Lady Tressilian's.

**LEACH.** I'll try and arrange it, Uncle.