

Sound Engineer

+  
Lights

①

SALESIAN THEATRE

— SUEMA —

SCRIPT No. 269

## THE 'VAN UPSTAIRS

Scene: The living-room of a cottage in a remote district of North Cornwall.

DARKNESS

Time: Late evening in Summer. WIND & RAIN

Gerry (Flashing a lighted torch around the room) The owner appears to be out.

David Perhaps he's upstairs.

Gerry I didn't notice a light anywhere. Anyway, let's give a shout. (He crosses to the foot of the staircase).

David Gerry don't.

Gerry Why not?

David Don't you think we ought to knock again - just in case?

Gerry What's the use? We've knocked twice already. If he is in, he's much more likely to hear us if we're inside than out. (Shouting up the stairs, with a bellow) Anyone at home?

(There is no answer, and GERRY opens the door Down L and flashes his torch inside.

Gerry Umph, kitchen. (Closing the door, and turning back to David) Well, he's definitely not at home.

David But the front door was unlocked.

Gerry That's nothing to go by. People are much more trusting in this part of the world. (Gerry flashes his torch round the room, and see the lamp) Crossing to the table) Splendid! (Striking a match) If there's any oil in this thing we'll have a proper light on the scene.

David Good Lord, you've got a nerve.

\*Light up.

Gerry (Lighting the lamp) If the owner does return suddenly, it won't look nearly as suspicious as being found in the dark. (The lamp is now alight) \*Cheers it works (Picking up the lamp and rocking it gently) Plenty of oil in it, too. (Gazing round the room). Not a bad port in a storm is it?

David I wonder who it belongs to?

Gerry Haven't the foggiest idea. You know, David, we're jolly lucky to have stumbled on this place.

David All I hope is the owner doesn't return suddenly.

Gerry What a windy blighter you are. No one could object to our taking shelter on such a terrible night.

David I'm thinking of the lamp.

Gerry Well forget about it. By the way, you'd better slip that coat off, it's pretty sodden.

David (Sarcastically) Shall I take a hot bath while I'm about it?

Gerry (Severely) Take it off, and don't behave like a young ass. I should have thought a dose of double pneumonia would have been enough even for you.

David I wish you wouldn't talk as if I were a chronic invalid.

Gerry You will be, if you don't do as you're told.

David (With a grin) All right, Matron. (David takes off his coat, shakes it, and throws it over the head of the settee.) Will that satisfy you?

Gerry *opening door - WIND + RAIN - + closing.*  
(Looking out of the window) What a poisonous night!

David It's summer, old man.

Gerry And to think we might have been in Fowey by now, if it weren't for that temperamental bone-shaker down the road. When we get back to town the first thing I'm going to do is wring Brian Williams' scraggy neck.

David What's Brian got to do with our being stranded?

Gerry Well, he sold me the blessed thing, didn't he? Said it had only done fifteen thousand miles. By the way that four-wheeled sardine tin coughs its inside out I should say five hundred thousand was nearer the mark.

David Well, it can't be helped. What do we do now - light a fire with the owner's furniture, just to show him how thoroughly we're at home?

Gerry I'll tell you what I'm going to do, David. I'm going back to that garage we passed.

David But, good Lord, it must be three miles.

Gerry What of it?

David (reaching for his coat) All right.

Gerry (with a restraining hand) Oh, no, you don't.

David You're not going alone?

Gerry Of course I am, you ass.

David No, you're not. I'm coming with you.

Gerry (scathingly) You're in the right state of health to plod three miles in this, aren't you?

David I don't care. I'm not going to stay here.

Gerry Now, for the love of Mike, don't add to our troubles. You know perfectly well that if the doctor had had his way you'd still be in bed.

David Carmichael's an old woman.

You

Gerry He may be, but he pulled ~~out~~ through. I'd like you to remember that the idea of this tour was to make a new man of you - not put you in a churchyard.

David You're as big a fuss-pot as Carmichael, but I won't add to your sorrows. At the same time, I rather dread explaining matters to the owner on my own. Perhaps if I turned the lamp out, and waited just inside the door, it wouldn't look so - er-trespassy.

Gerry It would look darned suspicious lurking about in his doorway in the dark. Much better put a bold face on the matter, and meet him in the glare of his own light. I don't know what you're so windy about.

David Well, I haven't got your colossal nerve.

Gerry My dear David, you don't need nerve to tell a man the truth. If he happens to get back before I do, all you have to do is to explain our predicament to him in that disarming manner of yours. Ten to one, he'll offer you a drink. This looks the sort of dump that would ~~house~~ a bottle of Scotch.

David I admire your optimism, but I'd much rather come with you.

Gerry Don't be silly.

David (eagerly) Or I could wait ~~in~~ in the car.

Gerry (sarcastically) Splendid suggestion! Why not <sup>IN</sup> the duck pond - you'll be just <sup>as</sup> cosy? <sup>^</sup>

David The hood isn't as bad as all that.

Gerry My dear man, as a vegetable strainer that hood's unequalled, but as a means of protection from the English summer, it's a complete washout. (Buttoning up his coat). Well I'm going to make a start. If I can induce those garage people to get a move on we might be in Fowey by midnight - that's if we don't take the wrong road again. (Opening the door and looking out) What a night! **WIND & RAIN - + closing door**

David Why not wait a bit?

Gerry You don't imagine it's going to clear up, do you?

David But why the violent hurry to get to Fowey?

Gerry I've booked the rooms. Besides we've got to sleep somewhere. We can't very well stay here for the night.

David (with a grin) Why <sup>?</sup> do you think the owner would mind?

Gerry Well, I'm off.

David (in a more serious vein) Be as quick as you can, Gerry. (Gazing round) Somehow, I'm not terribly keen on this place.

Gerry (turning up his coat collar) Guilty conscience, my lad. But you might as well add to your sins by collaring the armchair. You can soon spring out if you hear him outside. (With a grin, and a nod in the direction of the bookcase) Pick yourself out a nice fruity novel to while away the time.

David (with an answering grin) Thanks, but my conscience has all the load it can stand.

Gerry Well, cheerio, you young blighter. (**Wind & Rain**)

David (not very heartily) Cheerio'. (Gerry exits). (At the door calling after Gerry) Gerry!

Gerry (off) Hulloa?

Continuous

David You will hurry, won't you?

Gerry (from the distance). All right, but get inside.

*wind + Rain (less)*

(pause) Page 41. (enter Wayland by the stairs)

*Door closed*

David (rising hastily, and advancing to R of table, thoroughly flustered). I really don't know how to apologize, sir. Er - er- you see -er-my brother and I were on our way to Fowey, and the car broke down about a quarter of a mile down the road-and- (Wayland, smiling rather cynically, walks with a peculiarly cat-like trend to the head of the table. There is something about his gait, and the sight of his unusually pale features, that makes DAVID instinctively afraid of him. Mastering his feeling with an effort) It's the most colossal nerve, I know, sir; lighting the lamp and-er-all that, but it's such a ghastly night that---(He pauses hoping for some word of encouragement).

Wayland (Softly) I have been waiting for you,

David (Puzzled) Waiting? I don't understand.

Wayland (indicating the small chair R of table). Sit down. (The subtle menace in WAYLAND's voice increases David's instinctive fear of him.)

David It's awfully good of you, but I feel I've already trespassed enough. I-er-my brother should be on his way back from the garage by now, so if you'll excuse me----  
(He makes a movement to cross up to the door, but WAYLAND blocks his path).

Wayland Are you afraid of me?

David (with a nervous laugh) Afraid? I don't understand. Why should I be afraid?

Wayland Sit down, Markham.

David Markham? You've made a mistake sir. My name's Trent - David Trent. (Pause) P. 42  
What are you doing? (With sudden alarm) Have you locked that door?

Wayland (crossing down to the head of the table). You are afraid of me to-night, Markham.

David I've already told you my name's Trent. And I should be glad if you'll explain.

Wayland (sitting in chair at head of table). Larrabee will be here soon, Markham. You remember Larrabee, don't you? (Almost in a whisper) Larrabee always comes.

David I don't know what you're talking about. Is it any use my telling you you've made a mistake? I'm not Markham. Why, I've never seen you before in my life.

Wayland And you never fail either, do you? Night after night, you sit in that same chair - next to me. (Leaning across the table, and staring intently at David) And I talk to you, Markham, just as I am talking to you now.

David But, I tell you....

Wayland To-night I waited so long that I was afraid you weren't coming; but I was wrong, wasn't I?

David I've already explained; you're confusing me with somebody else.

Wayland (Taking no notice of David's protest. With an insane chuckle). I've got used to you now. You're companionable. Amusing, isn't it? I hate you, but I'd miss you if you didn't come.

David (adopting the tone of one humouring a lunatic). Er - don't you think, sir, that as I promised to meet my brother, it would be better for me to----- (He pauses suddenly, when he sees that WAYLAND is taking no notice of him.)

Wayland (staring in the direction of the stairs. In a whisper). Listen!

David (impressed by the other's manner) What's the matter?

Wayland Don't you hear, Markham?

David Hear? Why, no I-----

Wayland The footsteps.

David (listening intently for a moment. Quickly). I hear nothing.

Wayland (almost in a whisper). Quiet-ominous footsteps. Soon they will come nearer, and then I shall hear them plainly - in this room - beside me. (Turning quickly to DAVID) Don't leave me to-night, Markham. Don't leave me to-night. (The note of fear has crept into his voice).

David (nervously) I don't understand. What are you afraid of?

Wayland (after a moment's pause, during which he is still listening intently). They've gone - but only for a little while. They will come back. They are sure to come back. (Turning to DAVID, the glint of madness shining from his eyes). You're not to leave me. (His voice rising) Do you understand, Markham - you're not to leave me. (DAVID seems benumbed. He tries to say something, but the seeming madness of his companion renders him incapable of speech. Calmer). Why do you always try and leave me before Larrabee comes? Are you afraid of Larrabee, too?

David (in a hoarse voice). Who is - Larrabee?

Wayland He never comes when you're here; that's why you must stay with me. (He pauses, and then in a low intense voice) I hate you, Markham. I have always hated you; but I have never feared you. (Gazing in his eyes with fear in the direction of the stairs) Larrabee is different. I am afraid - of Larrabee. I feared him alive, but now that he is dead---

David (springing to his feet hysterically) Dead? In heaven's name, what are you saying?

Wayland Amusing, isn't it, Markham? They hanged Larrabee for your death.

David (in the loud voice of hysteria). You're mad, do you hear? Mad! (He is on his feet). I'm not going to listen to you. I can't stand it I tell you. I can't stand it.

Wayland (rising and towering over DAVID menacingly). You don't want to make me angry, Markham, do you? (He raises his hand, as if he were holding a knife. His eyes are gleaming with insane and passionate hate). I'm dangerous when I'm angry, Markham. You understand - dangerous?

David (shrinking back, in a hoarse whisper). Heavens!

Wayland (in a smooth, even voice) It was a pity I had to kill you, Markham, but your knowledge of my affairs made me uncomfortable. Besides, I hated you. I hated everything about you; your open contempt, your air of superiority, your snobbishness. But, despite these things, you were always secretly afraid of me, weren't you? (He pauses, and another note comes into his voice). And then there was - Larrabee. I was frightened of Larrabee. (He gives a half-fearful glance in the direction of the stairs). He was dangerous - too dangerous.

(With an insane chuckle) But I was clever, Markham. I forgot nothing. It was Larrabee they saw leaving your flat on the night I killed you; it was Larrabee's finger-prints they found on the knife; it was Larrabee-----

David (Unable to bear the strain any longer). Stop it! For Heaven's sake, stop it!

Wayland Yes, Larrabee's finger-prints ~~is~~ not mine, Markham. (With an insane chuckle) Not mine. (Turning swiftly to DAVID, who is standing trembling by R. of table) Why are you looking at me like that? (His voice rising in insane fury). I see the same look in your eyes, as on that night when I - killed you. (Glaring for a moment at the cowering DAVID, and then continuing in the smooth voice of the raconteur). You remember that night, don't you, Markham? You were all alone. I'd waited for that. Waited to find you - alone. I told you then how I hated you; I told you the things I hated you for. You knew I'd come to kill you, didn't you? But you were brave that night. So brave that I - hesitated. But only for a moment. (He rises, his hand upraised, and slowly crosses to DAVID, his every movement fraught with menace). And then - and then - I struck. (With a stabbing movement of his upraised hand. DAVID, connered by WAYLAND, is in a state of panic-stricken terror. As if under some mesmeric spell, he finds it impossible to try to escape. )

David (with a wild cry). Keep away from me! For Heaven's sake, keep away from----- (The strain has at last been too much for DAVID, and he collapses in a dead faint on the floor).

WAYLAND Yes, I killed you, Markham; just as I had always planned to kill you. (Taking no notice of the recumbent figure at his feet, and staring out to his front). But I was clever. No one suspected, except Larrabee, and they hanged - Larrabee. Amusing, isn't it, Markham? They hanged Larrabee for the murder he didn't commit. (WAYLAND slowly crosses back to the head of the table. He seems oblivious of the fact that DAVID is no longer occupying the chair R of the table, as he continues to speak in that direction.) You remember what Larrabee said, before the judge passed sentence on him (With a mad laugh) Of course, you don't, you weren't there. You were dead - yes dead. (He pauses) He looked at me across the Court. There was hate in his eyes - an all-consuming hate. He said: "When I am dead, Wayland, I shall come back - wherever you are". Amusing, wasn't it? (In a whisper) But he's kept his word....(fear in his voice) Larrabee always comes back. (Listening intently) Markham, Markham! The footsteps! Don't you hear? The footsteps - Larrabee's footsteps? He's come for me, as he always does. Don't you hear him? Always the same measured tread - so soft - so deliberate - so menacing. (Now obsessed with fear, and looking round wildly) Markham, Markham, where are you? I didn't mean to kill you. I didn't mean to kill you. (Tonelessly, looking towards the stairs) Look, he's beckoning me. I've got to go. (Moving slowly towards the stairs). Yes I've got to go. (In almost a whisper) I'm coming, Larrabee. What do you want of me? (He has now reached the foot of the stairs). Why are you beckoning me? ( He starts to mount the stairs). (With a shriek of terror). The rope! The rope! What's that rope in you hands? (He puts up his hands as if to ward off some danger). No! No! (With his hands around his throat, as if trying to loosen some unseen pressure round it). Larrabee! Larrabee! (He is now out of sight of the audience). It's choking me - it's choking.

Wind + rain up slowly  
until Gerry + Carruthers have closed  
the door.

(From upstairs is heard a strangled cry, and then there is silence. DAVID has not moved, or shown any sign of consciousness. The noise of a car drawing up outside is then heard, followed by the voices of GERRY And CARRUTHERS off.)

Gerry (off) yes, this is the place (Gerry enters, followed by CARRUTHERS). I say, David - (seeing the recumbent figure of his brother) - Good Lord, what's happened) (He hurries to DAVID's side) David, David! (To CARRUTHERS) He's fainted. He has been rather ill, you know.

Carruthers I've got a brandy flask in the car. I'll just slip out and get it.

Gerry Thanks, if you would (CARRUTHERS exits). David old chap. (DAVID is still unconscious, and GERRY kneels beside him and loosens his collar and tie. CARRUTHERS re-enters with brandy flask.)

*Closes door - Wind & rain down.*

Carruthers (handing flask to GERRY) This'll revive him.

Gerry (taking it) Thanks! Awfully good of you. (GERRY puts the flask to his brother's lips, and after a sip of brandy DAVID opens his eyes. With a nod to CARRUTHERS) He's coming *to round.*

Carruthers Good.

David (In a whisper) Gerry!

Gerry I'm here old man. What's happened? (David slowly raises his head, as if he is not yet conscious of his surroundings. At the sight of the room everything comes back to him.)

David (To Gerry) Thank God, you've come. (In sudden terror) The man? Where is he?

Gerry What are you talking about? What man?

David He's mad. I thought he was going to *kill me!* - he came down the stairs. (He shudders) Heavens, it was awful.

Gerry (soothingly) Steady on, old chap. (Assisting David to his feet).

David Get me away. For Heaven's sake, get me away. He's horrible! Mad!

Gerry (To CARRUTHERS) Didn't you say the owner was away?

Carruthers (hesitatingly) Yes. He is-away. (Gerry looks curiously at CARRUTHERS. DAVID starts at the sound of a strange voice.)

David (pointing to CARRUTHERS) Gerry, who's-----?

Gerry Oh, this is Mr. Carruthers, David, who's very sportingly, offered us a lift into Fowey.

David (Puzzled) Carruthers?

Carruthers (to DAVID, with a smile). Feeling better now?

David Yes thanks, I----- (The fear returns to his eyes). Get me away quickly--before-----

Gerry Pull yourself together, David. *Wind & Rain.*

Carruthers (to GERRY) I think he'd be better in the car. (To DAVID, with a smile) It's only just outside.

Gerry (drawing Carruthers aside) I'm going up to have a look, just in case there is - anything.

Carruthers I think we'd better get him to the car first. He looks all done *up in.*

Gerry (with a look at the still frightened DAVID). Yes, perhaps it would be better. (Crossing to DAVID's side) Come on, David we're going to make tracks. (To CARRUTHERS) Would you mind seeing him into the car?

Carruthers Right. (He takes DAVID's arm) Come on, old man. It's only just outside. (DAVID allows himself to be led towards the door. His movements show him to be in a pitiable state of nerves. At the door, he looks back at his brother).

David Gerry?

Gerry You go on with Mr. Carruthers, David. I'm just coming.

David (with a look of fear in the direction of the staircase). Gerry you're not.....

Gerry (Impatiently) For Heaven's sake, pull yourself together. I'm coming now. ~~X~~ (The harsh tone GERRY has used towards his brother has the desired effect, for DAVID offers no further demur, and, taking up his coat from the settee, he exits with CARRUTHERS.) ~~X~~ DOOR OPENS + CLOSES (W+R)

Carruthers (cheerily off). This is my bus. You'll find it fairly roomy. (As soon as the two men have got to the car, GERRY crosses quickly to the stairs. He pauses for a moment, and then - fully prepared for trouble - quietly makes his way up the staircase. After a few seconds' pause ~~X~~ CARRUTHERS re-enters. He goes at once to the foot of the stairs. 2.

Carruthers (calling up the stairs). Trent! (Receiving no reply, his call becomes louder and rather more anxious). Trent!

Gerry (Off) All right, I'm coming. (GERRY re-enters down the stairs. Anxiously). Where's my brother?

Carruthers He's all right. My chauffeur's looking after him.

Gerry Thanks for all you're doing.

Carruthers Not at all. (With a nod upstairs) Well?

Gerry No one there. I didn't really think there was. The young idiot's been imagining things.

Carruthers Think so?

Gerry Of course. (Suddenly to CARRUTHERS) Come on, Carruthers, out with it.

Carruthers What do you mean?

Gerry What's queer about this place?

Carruthers Why?

Gerry I only wondered. You live in this district, don't you?

Carruthers Is that why you asked?

Gerry Not exactly. There are two reasons. I thought you seemed somewhat evasive when I asked you if the owner was away.

Carruthers And the second reason?

Gerry Well, it was when I was upstairs just now. There was a peculiar sort of - atmosphere about the place. I'm not sensitive to such things as a rule, and I can't quite describe it. But, it was a sort of - deathly smell. (CARRUTHERS gives a start. Looking keenly at him). You know what I mean?

Carruthers (slowly) Yes, I think I know what you mean. (After a pause) Ever hear of the Larrabee case?

Gerry (thinking hard) Larrabee? The name seems vaguely familiar.

Carruthers Well, Larrabee was hanged for the murder of a man named Markham, and the former tenant of this cottage was the principal witness for the prosecution.

Gerry But, I don't quite see-----?

Carruthers A few weeks after Larrabee was executed, this witness, Wayland, the tenant of this place, committed suicide. Heaven knows why. There didn't appear to be any reason for it. No money worries, or anything of that sort.

Gerry Do you mean he committed suicide here?

Carruthers Yes. Hanged himself upstairs. (GERRY gives a whistle of amazement). Since then this cottage is supposed to be haunted.

Gerry But you don't really believe-----?

Carruthers All I can say is that the owner wouldn't spend a night alone in this cottage for all the money in the world. (Moving with GERRY towards the door. At the door). You see, Trent, I ought to know. I own it.

CURTAIN

Wind + Rain up!