

We'd better tell him. [Abby starts to cellar door as JONATHAN comes in. *They meet* U. S. C. *front of sofa. His clothes are dirty.*]

Oh, Jonathan—you might as well stop what you're doing.

JONATHAN. It's all done. Did I hear Mortimer?

ABBY. Well, it will just have to be undone. You're all going to be out of this house by morning. Mortimer's promised.

JONATHAN. Oh, are we? In that case, you and Aunt Martha can go to bed and have a pleasant night's sleep.

MARTHA. [*Always a little frightened by JONATHAN, starts up stairs.*] Yes. Come, Abby.

[ABBY follows MARTHA up stairs.]

JONATHAN. Good night, Aunties.

ABBY. Not good night, Jonathan. Good-bye. By the time we get up you'll be out of this house. Mortimer's promised.

MARTHA. [*On balcony.*] And he has a way of doing it too!

JONATHAN. Then Mortimer is back?

ABBY. Oh, yes, he's up here talking to Teddy.

MARTHA. Good-bye, Jonathan.

ABBY. Good-bye, Jonathan.

JONATHAN. Perhaps you'd better say good-bye to Mortimer.

ABBY. Oh, you'll see Mortimer.

JONATHAN. [*Sitting on stool.*] Yes—I'll see Mortimer.

[ABBY and MARTHA exit. JONATHAN sits without moving. There is murder in his thought. EINSTEIN enters from cellar. He dusts off his trouser cuffs, lifting his leg, and we see he is wearing Spendax's sport shoes.]

EINSTEIN. Whew! That's all fixed up. Smooth like a lake. Nobody'd ever know they were down there. [JONATHAN still sits without moving.] That bed feels good already. Forty-eight hours we didn't sleep. [*Crossing to second stair.*] Come on, Chonny, let's go up, yes?

JONATHAN. You're forgetting, Doctor.

EINSTEIN. What?

JONATHAN. My brother Mortimer.

EINSTEIN. Chonny—tonight? We do that tomorrow or the next day.

JONATHAN. [*Just able to control himself.*] No, tonight! Now!

EINSTEIN. [*Down to floor.*] Chonny, please—I'm tired—and tomorrow I got to operate.

JONATHAN. Yes, you're operating tomorrow, Doctor. But tonight we take care of Mortimer.

EINSTEIN. [*Kneeling in front of JONATHAN, trying to pacify him.*]

But, Chonny, not tonight—we go to bed, eh?

JONATHAN. [*Rising. EINSTEIN straightens up too.*] Doctor, look at me. You can see it's going to be done, can't you?

EINSTEIN. [*Retreating.*] Ah, Chonny—I can see. I know dat look!

JONATHAN. It's a little too late for us to dissolve our partnership. EINSTEIN. O.K., we do it. But the quick way. The quick twist like in London. [*He gives that London neck another twist with his hands and makes a noise suggesting strangulation.*]

JONATHAN. No, Doctor, I think this calls for something special. [*He walks toward EINSTEIN, who breaks U. S. JONATHAN has the look of beginning to anticipate a rare pleasure.*] I think perhaps the Melbourne method.

EINSTEIN. Chonny—no—not that. Two hours! And when it was all over, what? The fellow in London was just as dead as the fellow in Melbourne.

JONATHAN. We had to work too fast in London. There was no esthetic satisfaction in it—but Melbourne, ah, there was something to remember.

EINSTEIN. [*Drooping D. S. as JONATHAN crosses him.*] Remember! [*He shivers.*] I wish I didn't. No, Chonny—not Melbourne—not me!

JONATHAN. Yes, Doctor. Where are the instruments?

EINSTEIN. I won't do it, Chonny.—I won't do it.

JONATHAN. [*Advancing on him as EINSTEIN backs D. S.*] Get your instruments!

EINSTEIN. No, Chonny!

JONATHAN. Where are they? Oh, yes—you hid them in the cellar. Where?

EINSTEIN. I won't tell you.

JONATHAN. [*Going to cellar door.*] I'll find them, Doctor. [*He exits to cellar, closing door.*]

[TEDDY enters on balcony and lifts his bugle to blow. MORTIMER dashes out and grabs his arm. EINSTEIN has rushed to cellar door. He stands there as MORTIMER and TEDDY speak.]

MORTIMER. Don't do that, Mr. President.

TEDDY. I cannot sign any proclamation without consulting my cabinet.

MORTIMER. But this must be a secret.

TEDDY. A secret proclamation? How unusual.

MORTIMER. Japan mustn't know until it's signed.

TEDDY. Japan! Those yellow devils. I'll sign it right away. [*Taking legal paper from MORTIMER.*] You have my word for it. I can let the cabinet know later.

MORTIMER. Yes, let's go and sign it.

TEDDY. You wait here. A secret proclamation has to be signed in secret.

MORTIMER. But at once, Mr. President.

TEDDY. I'll have to put on my signing clothes. [*TEDDY exits.*]

[*MORTIMER comes downstairs. EINSTEIN crosses and takes MORTIMER'S hat off of ball tree and hands it to him.*]

EINSTEIN. [*Anxious to get MORTIMER out of the house.*] Ah, you go now, eh?

MORTIMER. [*Takes hat and puts it on desk.*] No, Doctor, I'm waiting for something. Something important.

EINSTEIN. [*L. of MORTIMER.*] Please—you go now!

MORTIMER. Dr. Einstein, I have nothing against you personally. You seem to be a nice fellow. Take my advice and get out of this house and get just as far away as possible.

EINSTEIN. Trouble, yah! You get out.

MORTIMER. [*Crossing to c.*] All right, don't say I didn't warn you.

EINSTEIN. I'm warning you—get away quick.

MORTIMER. Things are going to start popping around here any minute.

EINSTEIN. [*D. R.*] Listen—Chonny's in a bad mood. When he's like dis, he's a madman—things happen—terrible things.

MORTIMER. Jonathan doesn't worry me now.

EINSTEIN. Ach, himmel—don't those plays you see teach you anything?

MORTIMER. About what?

EINSTEIN. Well, at least people in plays act like they got sense—that's more than you do.

MORTIMER. [*Interested in this observation.*] Oh, you think so, do you? You think people in plays act intelligently. I wish you had

to sit through some of the ones I have to sit through. Take the little opus I saw tonight for instance. In this play, there's a man—he's supposed to be bright . . . [*JONATHAN enters from cellar with instrument case, stands in doorway and listens to MORTIMER.*]

—he knows he's in a house with murderers—he ought to know he's in danger—he's even been warned to get out of the house—but does he go? No, he stays there. Now I ask you, Doctor, is that what an intelligent person would do?

EINSTEIN. You're asking me?

MORTIMER. He didn't even have sense enough to be frightened, to be on guard. For instance, the murderer invites him to sit down.

EINSTEIN. [*He moves so as to keep MORTIMER from seeing JONATHAN.*] You mean—"Won't you sit down?"

MORTIMER. [*Reaches out and pulls armchair to him R. of table without turning his head from EINSTEIN.*] Believe it or not, that one was in there too.

EINSTEIN. And what did he do?

MORTIMER. [*Sitting in armchair.*] He sat down. Now mind you, this fellow's supposed to be bright. There he sits—just waiting to be trussed up. And what do you think they use to tie him with.

EINSTEIN. Var?

MORTIMER. The curtain cord.

[*JONATHAN spies curtain cords on either side of window in L. wall. He crosses, stands on window-seat and cuts cords with pen-knife.*]

EINSTEIN. Well, why not? A good idea. Very convenient.

MORTIMER. A little too convenient. When are playwrights going to use some imagination! The curtain cord!

[*JONATHAN has got the curtain cord and is moving in slowly behind MORTIMER.*]

EINSTEIN. He didn't see him get it?

MORTIMER. See him? He sat there with his back to him. That's the kind of stuff we have to suffer through night after night. And they say the critics are killing the theatre—it's the playwrights who are killing the theatre. So there he sits—the big dope—this fellow who's supposed to be bright—just waiting to be trussed up and gagged.

[*JONATHAN drops loop of curtain cord over MORTIMER'S shoulder and draws it taut. At the same time he throws other loop of cord*