

ABBY. No. When Teddy starts working on the canal you can't get his mind on anything else.

MORTIMER. Teddy's got to go to Happy Dale now—tonight.

MARTHA. Oh, no, dear, that's not until after we're gone.

MORTIMER. Right away, I tell you!—right away!

ABBY. [Turning to MORTIMER.] Why, Mortimer, how can you say such a thing? Why, as long as we live we'll never be separated from Teddy.

MORTIMER. [Trying to be calm.] Listen, darlings, I'm frightfully sorry, but I've got some shocking news for you. [The AUNTS stop work and look at him with some interest.] Now we've all got to try and keep our heads. You know we've sort of humored Teddy because we thought he was harmless.

MARTHA. Why he is harmless!

MORTIMER. He was harmless. That's why he has to go to Happy Dale. Why he has to be confined.

ABBY. [Stepping to MORTIMER.] Mortimer, why have you suddenly turned against Teddy?—your own brother?

MORTIMER. You've got to know sometime. It might as well be now, Teddy's—killed a man!

MARTHA. Nonsense, dear.

[MORTIMER rises and points to window-seat.]

MORTIMER. There's a body in the window-seat!

ABBY. Yes, dear, we know.

[MORTIMER "takes" as ABBY and MARTHA busy themselves again at table.]

MORTIMER. You know?

MARTHA. Of course, dear, but it has nothing to do with Teddy.

[Gets tray from sideboard—arranges silver and plates on table: 3 plates, U. L. and R.]

ABBY. Now, Mortimer, just forget about it—forget you ever saw the gentleman.

MORTIMER. Forget?

ABBY. We never dreamed you'd peek.

MORTIMER. But who is he?

ABBY. His name's Hoskins—Adam Hoskins. That's really all I know about him—except that he's a Methodist.

MORTIMER. That's all you know about him? Well, what's he doing here? What happened to him?

MARTHA. He died.

MORTIMER. Aunt Martha, men don't just get into window-seats and die.

ABBY. [Silly boy.] No, he died first.

MORTIMER. Well, how?

ABBY. Oh, Mortimer, don't be so inquisitive. The gentleman died because he drank some wine with poison in it.

MORTIMER. How did the poison get in the wine?

MARTHA. Well, we put it in wine because it's less noticeable—when it's in tea it has a distinct odor.

MORTIMER. You put it in the wine?

ABBY. Yes. And I put Mr. Hoskins in the window-seat because Dr. Harper was coming.

MORTIMER. So you knew what you'd done! You didn't want Dr. Harper to see the body!

ABBY. Well, not at tea—that wouldn't have been very nice. Now, Mortimer, you know the whole thing, just forget about it. I do think Martha and I have the right to our own little secrets. [She crosses to sideboard to get two goblets from U. cupboard as MARTHA comes to table from sideboard with salt dish and pepper shaker.]

MARTHA. And don't you tell Elaine! [She gets 3d goblet from sideboard, then turns to ABBY who takes tray from sideboard.] Oh, Abby, while I was out I dropped in on Mrs. Schultz. She's much better but she would like us to take Junior to the movies again.

ABBY. Well, we must do that tomorrow or next day.

MARTHA. Yes, but this time we'll go where we want to go. [She starts for kitchen door. ABBY follows.] Junior's not going to drag me into another one of those scary pictures. [They exit into kitchen as MORTIMER wheels around and looks after them. ABBY shuts door.]

MORTIMER. [Dazed, looks around the room. His eyes come to rest on phone on desk; he crosses to it and dials a number. Into phone.] City desk! [There is a pause.] Hello, Al. Do you know who this is? [Pause.] That's right. Say, Al, when I left the office, I told you where I was going, remember?—Well, where did I say? [Pause.] Uh-huh. Well, it would take me about half an hour to get to Brooklyn. What time have you got? [He looks at his watch.] That's right. I must be here. [He hangs up, sits for a moment, then suddenly leaps off stool toward kitchen.] Aunt Abby! Aunt

Martha! Come in here! [*He backs to C. stage as the two AUNTS bustle in. MARTHA has tray with plates, cups, saucers and soup cups.*] What are we going to do? What are we going to do?  
MARTHA. [*R. of table.*] What are we going to do about what, dear?

MORTIMER. [*Pointing to window-seat.*] There's a body in there.  
ABBY. [*U. L. of MORTIMER.*] Yes—Mr. Hoskins.

MORTIMER. Well, good heavens, I can't turn you over to the police! But what am I going to do?

MARTHA. Well, for one thing, dear, stop being so excited.

ABBY. And for pity's sake stop worrying. We told you to forget the whole thing.

MORTIMER. Forget! My dear Aunt Abby, can't I make you realize that something has to be done?

ABBY. [*A little sharply.*] Now, Mortimer, you behave yourself. You're too old to be flying off the handle like this.

MORTIMER. But Mr. Horckiss —

[*ABBY, on her way to sideboard, stops and turns to MORTIMER.*]

ABBY. Hoskins, dear. [*She continues on her way to sideboard and gets napkins and rings from L. drawer. MARTHA puts her tray, with cups, plates, etc., on table. MORTIMER continues speaking through this.*]

MORTIMER. Well, whatever his name is, you can't leave him there.

MARTHA. We don't intend to, dear.

ABBY. [*Crossing to table L. with napkins and rings.*] No, Teddy's down in the cellar now digging the lock.

MORTIMER. You mean you're going to bury Mr. Horckiss in the cellar?

MARTHA. [*Stepping to him.*] Oh, yes, dear,—that's what we did with the others.

MORTIMER. [*Walking away to R.*] No! You can't bury Mr.— [*Double take. Turns back to them.*—others?

ABBY. The other gentlemen.

MORTIMER. When you say others—do you mean—others? More than one others?

MARTHA. Oh, yes, dear. Let me see, this is eleven. [*To ABBY U. L. of table.*] Isn't it, Abby?

ABBY. No, dear, this makes twelve.

[*MORTIMER backs away from them, stunned, toward phone stool at desk.*]

MARTHA. Oh, I think you're wrong, Abby. This is only eleven.

ABBY. No, dear, because I remember when Mr. Hoskins first came in, it occurred to me that he would make just an even dozen.

MARTHA. Well, you really shouldn't count the first one.

ABBY. Oh, I was counting the first one. So that makes it twelve.

[*Phone rings. MORTIMER, in a daze, turns toward it and without picking up receiver, speaks.*]

MORTIMER. Hello! [*He comes to, picks up receiver.*] Hello. Oh, hello, Al. My, it's good to hear your voice.

[*ABBY, at table, is still holding out for a "twelve" count.*]

ABBY. Well, anyway, they're all down in the cellar —

MORTIMER. [*To AUNTS.*] Sssh — [*Into phone, as AUNTS cross to sideboard and put candleabras from top to bottom shelf.*]

Oh, no, Al, I'm sober as a lark. I just called you because I was feeling a little Pirandello—Piran—you wouldn't know, Al. Look, I'm glad you called. Get hold of George right away. He's got to review the play tonight. I can't make it. No, Al, you're wrong. I'll tell you all about it tomorrow. Well, George has got to cover the play tonight! This is my department and I'm running it! You get ahold of George! [*He hangs up and sits a moment trying to collect himself.*] Now let's see, where were we? [*He suddenly leaps from stool.*] TWELVE!

MARTHA. Yes, Abby thinks we ought to count the first one and that makes twelve. [*She goes back to sideboard.*]

[*MORTIMER takes chair R. of table and faces it toward R. stage, the 7 takes MARTHA by the hand, leads her to chair and sets her in it.*]

MORTIMER. All right—now—who was the first one?

ABBY. [*Crossing from above table to MORTIMER.*] Mr. Midgely.

He was a Baptist.

MARTHA. Of course, I still think we can't claim full credit for him because he just died.

ABBY. Martha means without any help from us. You see, Mr. Midgely came here looking for a room —