

Rough and Mrs. Manningham

Act I: Rough's first appearance, calling on Mrs. Manningham of his own volition, on a mission for her benefit, and for his: apprehending the the man who committed murder in this very house, and whom he has sought for fifteen years.

ROUGH. Ah—good evening. [*As he crosses down to Left end of settee.*] Mrs. Manningham. I believe— How are you, Mrs. Manningham? [*Chuckling, offers his hand.*]

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Shaking hands.*] How do you do? I'm very much afraid—

ROUGH. You're very much afraid you don't know me from Adam? That's about the root of the matter, isn't it?

[*ELIZABETH goes out Left Center, closing the doors.*]

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Oh, no—it's not that—but no doubt you have come to see my husband?

ROUGH. [*Who is still holding her hand, and looking at her appraisingly.*] Oh, no! You couldn't be further out.

[*Chuckling.*] On the contrary, I have chosen this precise moment to call when I knew your husband was out. May I take off my things and sit down? [*Starts to remove his coat.*]

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Why, yes, I suppose you may.

ROUGH. You're a good deal younger and more attractive than I thought, you know. But you're looking very pale. Have you been crying?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Really—I'm afraid I don't understand at all.

ROUGH. You will do so, Madam, very shortly. [*Goes Left Center and begins to remove scarf.*] You're the lady who's going off her head, aren't you? [*Chuckles. To lower end of desk. He puts his hat on the desk and is removing his scarf and overcoat.*]

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Terrified.*] What made you say that? [*Goes toward him. Stops at Center.*] Who are you? What have you come to talk about?

ROUGH. Ah, you're running away with things, Mrs. Manningham, and asking me a good deal I can't answer at once. [*Taking off coat, and putting it on chair down Left and then crosses to down Left Center.*] Instead of that, I am going to ask you a question or two— Now, please, will you come here, and give me your hands? [*Pause. She obeys.*] Now, Mrs. Manningham, I want you to take a good look at me, and see if you are not looking at someone to whom you can give your trust. I am a perfect stranger to you, and you can read little in my face besides that. But I can read a great deal in yours.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Pause.*] What? What can you read in mine?

ROUGH. Why, Madam, I can read the tokens of one who has travelled a very long way upon the path of sorrow and doubt—and will have, I fear, to travel a little further yet before she comes to the end. But I fancy she is coming towards the end, for all that. Come now, are you going to trust me, and listen to me?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Pause.*] Who are you? God knows I need help.

ROUGH. [*Still holding her hands.*] I very much doubt whether God knows anything of the sort, Mrs. Manningham. If he did I believe he would have come to your aid before this. But I am here, and so you must give me your faith.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Withdraws her hand and withdraws a step.*] Who are you? Are you a doctor?

ROUGH. Nothing so learned, Ma'am. Just a plain police detective.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Shrinks away.*] Police detective?

ROUGH. Yes. Or was some years ago. [*Crossing to chair Left of table.*] At any rate, still detective enough to see that you've been interrupted in your tea. Couldn't you start again, and let me have a cup? [*He stands back of chair Left of table and holds it for her.*]

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Why, yes—yes. I will give you a cup. It only wants water. [*She begins to busy herself with hot water, cup, pot, etc., throughout the ensuing conversation.*]

ROUGH. [*Crosses around above table and to back of chair Right of it.*] You never heard of the celebrated Sergeant Rough, Madam? Sergeant Rough, who solved

the Claudesley Diamond Case—Sergeant Rough, who hunted down the Camberwell dogs—Sergeant Rough, who brought Sandham himself to justice. [*He has his hand on back of chair, as he looks at her*] Or were all such sensations before your time?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Looking up at ROUGH.*] Sandham? Why, yes—I have heard of Sandham—the murderer—the Throttler.

ROUGH. Yes—Madam—Sandham the Throttler. And you are now looking at the man who gave Sandham to the man who throttled him. And that was the common hangman. In fact, Mrs. Manningham—you have in front of you one who was quite a personage in his day—believe it or not.

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*As she adds water to the tea.*] I quite believe it. Won't you sit down? I'm afraid it won't be very hot.

ROUGH. Thank you— [*Sitting.*] How long have you been married, Mrs. Manningham?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Pouring tea.*] Five years—and a little.

ROUGH. Where have you lived during all that time, Mrs. Manningham? Not here, have you?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. [*Putting milk in his cup and passing it to him.*] No—first we went abroad—then we lived in Yorkshire, and then six months ago my husband bought this house.

ROUGH. You bought it?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Yes. I had a bit of money. My husband thought this was an excellent investment.

ROUGH. [*Taking cup.*] You had a bit of money, eh? That's very good. And does your husband always leave you alone like this in the evenings?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Yes. He goes to his club, I believe, and does business.

ROUGH. Oh, yes— [*He is stirring his tea, thoughtfully.*]

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Yes—

ROUGH. And does he give you a free run of the whole house while he's out?

MRS. MANNINGHAM. Yes— Well, no—not the top floor. Why do you ask?

ROUGH. Ah—not the top floor—