

Audition Piece #3 - Cynthia Magnus,

THE REAL INSPECTOR HOUND / 2797

Simon

of stairs with landings in between. It arrives bearing MAGNUS at about 15 m.p.h., knocking SIMON over violently.]

CYNTHIA Simon!

MAGNUS [Roaring.] Never had a chance! Ran under the wheels!

CYNTHIA Darling, are you all right?

MAGNUS I have witnesses!

CYNTHIA Oh, Simon—say something!

SIMON [Sitting up suddenly.] I'm most frightfully sorry.

MAGNUS [Shouting yet.] How long have you been a pedestrian?

SIMON Ever since I could walk.

CYNTHIA Can you walk now . . . ?

[SIMON rises and walks.]

Thank God! Magnus, this is Simon Gascoyne.

MAGNUS What's he doing here?

CYNTHIA He just turned up.

MAGNUS Really? How do you like it here?

SIMON [To CYNTHIA.] I could stay for ever.

[FELICITY enters.]

FELICITY So—you're still here.

CYNTHIA Of course he's still here. We're going to play cards. There's no need to introduce you two, is there, for I recall now that you, Simon, met me through Felicity, our mutual friend.

FELICITY Yes, Simon is an old friend, though not as old as you, Cynthia dear.

SIMON Yes, I haven't seen Felicity since—

FELICITY Last night.

CYNTHIA Indeed? Well, you deal, Felicity. Simon, you help me with the sofa. Will you partner Felicity, Magnus, against Simon and me?

MAGNUS [Aside.] Will Simon and you always be partnered against me, Cynthia?

CYNTHIA What do you mean, Magnus?

MAGNUS You are a damned attractive woman, Cynthia.

CYNTHIA Please! Please! Remember Albert!

MAGNUS Albert's dead, Cynthia—and you are still young. I'm sure he would have wished that you and I—

CYNTHIA No, Magnus, this is not to be!

MAGNUS It's Gascoyne, isn't it? I'll kill him if he comes between us!

CYNTHIA [Calling.] Simon!

[The sofa is shoved towards the card table, once more revealing the corpse, though not to the players.]

BIRDBOOT Simon's for the chop⁶ all right.

CYNTHIA Right! Who starts?

MAGNUS I do. No bid.

CYNTHIA Did I hear you say you saw Felicity last night, Simon?

SIMON Did I—Ah yes, yes, quite—your turn, Felicity.

FELICITY I've had my turn, haven't I, Simon?—now, it seems, it's Cynthia's turn.

6. Will be cut down (slang).

CYNTHIA That's my trick, Felicity dear.
 FELICITY Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned,⁷ Simon.
 SIMON Yes, I've heard it said.
 FELICITY So I hope you have not been cheating, Simon.
 SIMON [*Standing up and throwing down his cards.*] No, Felicity, it's just that I hold the cards!⁸
 CYNTHIA Well done, Simon!
 [MAGNUS pays SIMON, while CYNTHIA deals.]
 FELICITY Strange how Simon appeared in the neighbourhood from nowhere. We know so little about him.
 SIMON It doesn't always pay to show your hand!
 CYNTHIA Right! Simon, it's your opening on the minor bid.⁹
 [SIMON plays.]
 CYNTHIA Hm, let's see. . . . [*Plays.*]
 FELICITY I hear there's a dangerous madman on the loose.
 CYNTHIA Simon?
 SIMON Yes—yes—sorry. [*Plays.*]
 CYNTHIA I meld.
 FELICITY Yes—personally, I think he's been hiding out in the deserted cottage [*Plays.*] on the cliffs.
 SIMON Flush!
 CYNTHIA No! Simon—your luck's in tonight!
 FELICITY We shall see—the night is not over yet, Simon Gascoyne! [*She exits.*]
 [MAGNUS pays SIMON again.]
 SIMON [*To MAGNUS.*] So you're the crippled half-brother of Lord Muldoon who turned up out of the blue from Canada just the other day, are you? It's taken you a long time to get here. What did you do—walk? Oh, I say, I'm most frightfully sorry!
 MAGNUS Care for a spin round the rose garden, Cynthia?
 CYNTHIA No, Magnus, I must talk to Simon.
 SIMON My round, I think, Major.
 MAGNUS You think so?
 SIMON Yes, Major—I do.
 MAGNUS There's an old Canadian proverb handed down from the Blad-foot Indians, which says: He who laughs last laughs longest.
 SIMON Yes, I've heard it said.
 [SIMON turns away to CYNTHIA.]
 MAGNUS Well, I think I'll go and oil my gun.¹ [*He exits.*]
 CYNTHIA I think Magnus suspects something. And Felicity . . . Simon, was there anything between you and Felicity?
 SIMON No, no—it's over between her and me, Cynthia—it was a mere passing fleeting thing we had—but now that I have found you—
 CYNTHIA If I find that you have been untrue to me—if I find that you have falsely seduced me from my dear husband Albert—I will kill you, Simon Gascoyne!

7. Cf. Congreve, *The Mourning Bride* 3.7: "Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned, / Nor Hell a fury, like a woman scorned."
 8. Have the advantage (slang).

9. Term used in certain card games, as also "meld" and "flush," below.
 1. Go to the lavatory (slang).