

ACT I

The Lodger

(Sound effect: Big Ben, foghorn in distance, rain throughout most of this play.)

(Music: Spooky.)

ELLEN. Robert, how about this Avenger person. You know, he could be the person standing next to you or maybe the man you bump into. It's a terrible thought.

ROBERT. Yes. If only the police had something to go on. It looks like the Avenger is just too quick for them.

ELLEN. But, look here, it says this girl he got last night was like all the others: pretty, blonde, and she had just come from the music hall. Exactly like all the rest of his victims. And, let's see... "described by her friends as a very lighthearted girl." *(Tisks.)* Oh, what a pity.

ROBERT. Ellen, did you ever stop to think who fits that to a tee? In fact, fits all those girls' descriptions perfectly? Our own Daisy!

ELLEN. Oh, that's a pretty thought, Robert. Well, maybe it's a good thing that she's with her aunt instead of here. London isn't a safe place for any girl right now.

ROBERT. Just the same, I can't help thinking how fine it would be to have her here with us.

ELLEN. Well, there's no sense in even talking about it. We just can't afford it.

ROBERT. Oh, I know that, Ellen. But I hoped we could manage it some way.

ELLEN. How?! Haven't I scrimped myself half crazy trying to keep us going? But you don't care about that, do you? No, your Daisy's more important to you than I am.

ROBERT. Now, Ellen, that don't sound like you.

ELLEN. Well, I can't help if it don't. What are we going to do?

ROBERT. We'll get along, dear. Something will turn up.

ELLEN. We haven't had a lodger for months. Nobody even comes to look at the room anymore.

ROBERT. Things will work out, my love.

ELLEN. They ain't never going to work out. Soon enough we won't even have a roof over our heads. Oh, I'm sorry, Robert, I didn't mean to go on so.

ROBERT. Oh, I know you didn't, dear. It's alright.

ELLEN. I didn't think. It's just that I've been so worried.

ROBERT. Don't you go worrying another second, old girl. Why, first thing you know you won't be pretty anymore, you'll have your face all wrinkled and your—

ELLEN. Now, see here!

ROBERT. C'mon, let's see a smile, just one smile.

ELLEN. Oh, let me alone...

(They laugh as...)

(Sound effect: Door knocker.)

ELLEN. *(Easily shocked at first, almost with a gasp:)* Oh! Well, who do you suppose that could be?

ROBERT. Awful late for visitors.

ELLEN. Robert, do you think it should be somebody looking for a room?

ROBERT. Well, it might be!

ELLEN. Oh, I wish it were. Then you could have your Daisy back.

ROBERT. Want me to go to the door?

ELLEN. No, I'll go. You just stay here.

ROBERT. Well, alright. Now, be sure you get a good look at him before you let him in, dear.

(Sound effect: Door knocker.)

ELLEN. Oh, I'm coming...

(Sound effect: Door unlocked and opened.)

(Sound effect: Rain louder.)

ELLEN. Good evening, sir.

SLEUTH. I saw your sign. It says you have a room to rent.

(Sound effect: Thunder clap.)

ELLEN. Yes, sir. Yes. Please, won't you come in?

(Sound effect: Door closes.)

(Sound effect: Rain softer.)

(Sound effect: SLEUTH walks with a limp and uses a cane, which is his signature and should be used to underscore throughout.)