

Scene 4

Narrator - Dr. Davidson has been found dead in his study, the morning after announcing his intentions to disinherit his entire family. We join them in the drawing room later that morning as they are greeted by the police detective assigned to the case...

McTavish - Good morning, everyone, my name is Inspector Miles McTavish and I'll be conducting the investigation into the death of Dr. Davidson. Thank you all for your co-operation, I will endeavour to make this unpleasant process as brief and painless as possible. Mr. Davidson, Mrs. Smythe, Mrs. Forrester, may I take this opportunity to express my condolences to you and your family.

Marlena - Thank you, Inspector.

Sadie (murmuring) - Thank you.

McTavish - Thank you for your patience while the photographers documented the scene, I understand they left only moments before I arrived. I have called the coroner's office for the removal of Dr. Davidson's remains, but of course I shall be examining the body first, and the crime scene itself, if one of you would be so good as to show me where the deceased was found.

Oliver - I'll do it. Rodney, stay down here and make sure your sisters are alright, there's a good chap.

Rodney - If you insist.

McTavish - Speaking of, if it's not too indelicate a thing to say at such a moment, I have to insist that none of you leave the premises until I have concluded my investigation. My associate Sergeant Roy will be joining us shortly...ah, there he is now.

(sfx: Scuffle from the hallway, the sounds of two men)

Roy - Inside, with the others, come on...

Harrison - Unhand me you ape, this is outrageous!

Marlena - Harrison! What on earth were you doing?

Roy - The Inspector asked me to secure the grounds as soon as we arrived. Good thing too, because I caught this gentleman running through the back gate, wearing his coat and galoshes and carrying this valise.

Marlena - Harrison!

Harrison (desperately) - I can explain. If you'd only let me explain!

McTavish - Please, calm yourself sir. I will be interviewing all of you shortly, you'll have plenty of opportunity to explain anything you wish. Now, Sergeant, if you would follow me upstairs please? And be so good as to radio our confederates in the police car at the front gate to keep an eye on all points of exit from this...fine abode.

Roy - Already spoken to them, sir. There won't be any more escape attempts.

Sadie - Escape attempts! He's talking like we're a bunch of criminals.

Oliver - Somebody did kill him, Sadie. Let's not act too surprised they're keeping an eye on us.

McTavish - Mr. Forrester, is it? Thank you, please do show me where the body was discovered. Sergeant Roy, would you join us please?

(sfx: footsteps on stairs)

Oliver (unlocking door) - He's in here, Inspector. No one has touched anything.

McTavish - And it was you who discovered the body? Just as he is here, lying just so?

Oliver - Yes...well, no, as a matter of fact, I didn't find him. Hannah, the Davidsons' housekeeper did. She screamed and we all came running.

McTavish - I see. Thank you Mr. Forrester, please join your family downstairs. Sergeant Roy and I will be with you shortly.

Oliver - Did you search Harrison Smythe? After you caught him attempting to leave the scene of the crime?

Roy - I patted him down for weapons, yes.

Oliver - You should look into him very carefully, Inspector. We all found out last night he's not who he says he is, and there's some indication he's actually a wanted man.

McTavish - Thank you, Mr. Forrester. I will be interviewing everyone. Now...if you please...

Oliver - Certainly. I'll be downstairs consoling my wife and sister-in-law... whom I know are simply devastated by the loss of their dear father.

McTavish - Of course. Please close the door when you leave.

(sfx: Door closes)

McTavish - Well then...be so good as to take down some notes while I ponder the scene, Roy.

Roy - Ready when you are.

McTavish - To begin...the body of Dr. James Davidson was found in his study by the housekeeper at approximately eight am this morning. He appears to be fully dressed in his dinner attire, meaning he was, perhaps, killed before having changed for bed last night. (Pause) There appears to be a pinkish foam in the victim's mouth, indicating some manner of poison, perhaps. The post mortem will determine this, of course. But there is also a china teacup on the floor by the victim's right hand...indicating that this is how the poison was administered. Hand me a pen, Roy, so I may lift this up by the handle and preserve any fingerprints, just in case....thank you. (Sniff) Oh yes, a strong smell of bitter almonds, very distinctive. Very likely to be cyanide residue in this cup. Do please secure the cup as evidence, sergeant.

Roy - Yes sir. Cyanide...there's a wonder.

(sfx: Plastic bag rustling)

McTavish - There does not appear to be any other harm or insult to the body...do you concur Sergeant?

Roy - Not that I can see, sir. No bullet wounds or other injuries. Should we turn him over and check?

McTavish - No, I see no need for us to undertake such a labour. When the coroner's men arrive to remove the body we may satisfy ourselves that there are no other injuries to his person.

Roy (clicking tongue) - Such a typical story. One of the family bumped off the old goat, probably for his money.

McTavish - A good detective never leaps to conclusions when he can stroll there sedately and take in the view along the way, Sergeant.

Roy - If you say so, Sir. I've just seen my share of cases like these.

McTavish - As have I, Sergeant. But nevertheless, we owe this man our due diligence. Now, moving along...the room shows no signs of a struggle, and in fact the scene seems unremarkable in every other respect...but one.

Roy - The wall safe. It's wide open...and from the looks of it...it's been rifled through. There's the odd few papers here...nothing out of the ordinary, just some...looks like insurance papers.

(sfx: Rustling Papers)

McTavish - Please secure them as well, we'll have to examine them later.

Roy - Right you are. It doesn't look like the door was forced open...should I dust it for fingerprints? Oh hang on....hang on a minute, what's this?

McTavish - Did you find something, Sergeant?

Roy - What in blazes...here, what do you make of this...it looks like....
(dawning realization) oh, I've seen one of these before, my wife has been fiddling around with these silly things lately. It's a false eyelash.

McTavish - (puzzled) A false eyelash? Just one lash...or a whole row?

Roy - It's the whole thing, see for yourself...you glue this part on to your eyelid and bob's your uncle. Makes the girls feel like they're film stars. I think it's daft. But you know women. But oh, does this one reek to high heaven of perfume! Whew!

McTavish - Please bag the...uh...eyelash, Sergeant, and make note of where you found it.

(sfx: Plastic bag rustling)

McTavish - We shall have to determine if there exists some sort of inventory of what was kept in the safe.

Roy - Cash, I'd imagine. Jewels maybe.

McTavish - Stroll, sergeant. Don't leap.

Roy - Of course sir. But even on a stroll you're sure to get somewhere eventually. I think it stands to reason there were valuables in this safe.

McTavish - You're probably right. But let us turn our attention to the other aspects of the room...Hmmm....Look at the doctor's desk here...does anything about this desk strike you as odd, Roy?

Roy - (unsure) Umm...should something strike me as odd? Besides this contraption here (taps something metal)...with the long tube and the horn thingamabob on the end.

McTavish - That's a dictating machine, it records one's voice onto wax cylinders so a typist can then transcribe the spoken word. Dictaphone I believe it's called. Aside from that, however, the desk contains only a fountain pen and a writing tablet...and aside from this book on the floor, which it appears he was reading when he died...what's the title...*King Lear*. Ah, a devotee of the bard, not unexpected in an educated man...aside from this book, there is nothing else on any of the shelves. This room seems oddly sparse...There isn't even anything -

(sfx: Drawers opening)

McTavish - in any of the desk drawers.

(sfx: Pencil rolling)

Roy - Except this one pencil.

McTavish - How singular. You would think even a retired physician would keep files and paperwork in his study, perhaps even medical books.

Roy - There's no skeleton, either. I thought all doctors had skeletons in their surgeries.

McTavish - (snapping his finger) - His surgery. Of course, how careless of me. This must have been his personal study. He has a surgery downstairs, attached to the house, I made note of it when we arrived. I thought it odd at the time that a retired doctor would still maintain a surgery in his own home. We must investigate the surgery, come.

(sfx: Crunching of something underfoot)

McTavish - My goodness, what I have trod on...it looks like...it's some sort of ladies brooch. Oh dear, in my haste I fear I've ruined a rather fetching piece. Please help me collect the gems, Roy, I want this bagged as well.

Roy - Do you want all the little crushed bits, too? Or just the larger stones?

McTavish - All of it, if you please. (Musing) Odd...how very odd...

Narrator - *Downstairs in the drawing room, a few moments later...*

Sadie - Where are they going now? Papa's surgery? Whatever for?

Marlena - Come away from the window, Sadie, dear. You look suspicious, flicking the curtains like that.

Sadie - I just don't know what they could possibly want with Papa's surgery. He hasn't used it in years, has he?

Marlena - He mentioned to me some time ago that he would come out of retirement if we end up going to war with Germany. To do his bit, you know. Maybe he was starting to open it back up. Hannah, did he say anything to you about the surgery?

Hannah - Not as I recall. But come to think of it, he was down there last week, sorting out some old files or something, I don't know what, to tell the truth. But

he was down there a good few hours, puttering about. But not since, and it was just the once.

Dulcie - He dictated a letter for me to type up, to another doctor in Harley Street. It was about a patient, and he had me include some radiographs. He'd just gone down to the surgery to get them.

Rodney - Who cares about any of this? None of it matters now.

Oliver - It could matter very much Rodney...his surgery is where he kept all his chemicals and drugs...

Narrator - And in the doctor's surgery...

Roy - Where do we even begin? Looks like a typical doctor's office to me....

McTavish - Indeed...

(sfx: Opening a file cabinet)

McTavish - Empty, all his patient files have been cleared out. To be expected of a retired doctor, I suppose.

Roy - He was some big time surgeon, wasn't he? For the heart, or something?

McTavish - Yes, and he was quite famous for a particular suturing technique he invented, as I recall. He was a bit of a local celebrity, some people even bandied about the notion of a Nobel prize, at least according to the newspapers. Nevertheless, I know he retired from surgery and restricted himself to consultations with patients.

Roy - You amaze me, sir. How do you remember details like that from some newspaper story you read?

McTavish - Much as I would like to take credit for it, alas, I cannot. My aunt Alice was a patient of his up until last year when she passed. She was quite smitten with him, and regaled me with tales of what an honourable, erudite man he was.

Roy - Well, someone didn't think so.

McTavish - Indeed. Someone with access to this surgery...who could have chosen their murder weapon from this cabinet right here. Look at all these vials and bottles, Roy...this is where the murderer could have secured the cyanide...if it turns out to be the poison that was used. Which I believe it was.

Roy - Leaping, not strolling, sir?

McTavish (chuckling) Sometimes faith requires a leap, Roy.

Roy - Well, I don't believe that for a moment, sir. Why would a doctor have a deadly poison like cyanide? It makes no sense.

McTavish - There is a form of cyanide that is used by doctors to treat maladies of the heart. It is not so much used now, but in her day, my aunt insisted she needed it to preserve her life. Used carefully, it can have therapeutic effects, but even in very small doses it is rapidly and violently fatal. Yes, I'm confident enough to make this leap of logic, Sergeant. I believe this is what caused the death of Dr. Davidson.

Roy - So we're looking for someone who knew about this here poison, and someone who knew how to handle it, and someone who had access to the doctor's study.

McTavish - And of course, someone with a reason to want the doctor dead. If you would, please call the photographers back. We're going to need photographs of this surgery, and these vials. In the meantime, it's time to find more about this family...

Narrator - Why was Harrison trying to flee? What alibis do the other suspects have? Tune in next time find out the answers