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VERA 4

MACKENZIE

VERA. I'm glad Captain Lombard has got a revolver.

MACKENZIE. They're all wasting time - wasting time.

VERA. Do you think so?

MACKENZIE. Yes, it's much better to sit quietly - and wait.

VERA. Wait for what?

MACKENZIE. For the end, of course.

(He rises then opens and shuts the hall and the dining room doors.)

I wish I could find Lesley.

VERA. Your wife?

MACKENZIE. Yes. I wish you'd known her. She was so pretty.
So gay -

VERA. Was she?

MACKENZIE. I loved her very much. Of course, I was a lot older than she was. She was only twenty-seven, you know. *(Pause.)* Arthur Richmond was twenty-six. He was my A.D.C. *(Pause.)* Lesley liked him. They used to talk of music and plays together, and she teased him and made fun of him. I was pleased. I thought she took a motherly interest in the boy. Damn fool, wasn't I? No fool like an old fool. *(A long pause.)* Exactly like a book the way I found out. When I was out in France. She wrote to both of us, and she put the letters in the wrong envelope. So I knew -

VERA. Oh, no.

MACKENZIE. It's all right, my dear. It's a long time ago. But you see I loved her very much - and believed in her. I didn't say anything to him - I let it gather inside - here -

(He strikes his chest.)

- a slow, murderous rage - damned young hypocrite - I'd liked the boy - trusted him.

(VERA looks about nervously.)

VERA. I wonder what the others are doing?

MACKENZIE. I sent him to his death.

VERA. Oh -

MACKENZIE. It was quite easy. Mistakes were being made all the time. All anyone could say was that I'd lost my nerve a bit, made a blunder, sacrificed one of my best men. Yes, it was quite easy *(Pause.)* Lesley never knew. I never told her I'd found out. We went on as usual - but somehow nothing was quite real any more. She died of pneumonia. *(Pause.)* She had a heart-shaped face - and grey eyes - and brown hair that curled.

VERA. Oh, don't.

MACKENZIE. Yes, I suppose in a way - it was murder. Curious, murder - and I've always been such a law-abiding man. It didn't feel like that at the time. "Serves him damn well right!" that's what I thought. But after - *(Pause.)* Well, you know, don't you?

(VERA is at a loss.)

VERA. What do you mean?

(MACKENZIE stares at her as though something puzzles him.)

MACKENZIE. You don't seem to understand - I thought you would. I thought you'd be glad, too, that the end was coming -

(VERA draws back, alarmed; she eyes him warily.)

VERA. I -

(MACKENZIE follows her. VERA looks round for help.)

MACKENZIE. We're all going to die, you know.

VERA. I - I don't know.

MACKENZIE. You're very young - you haven't got to that yet. The relief! The blessed relief when you know that you've done with it all, that you haven't got to carry the burden any longer.

VERA. General -

MACKENZIE. Don't talk to me that way. You don't understand. I want to sit here and wait - wait for Lesley to come for me.

