

Barbara

BOB Thelma.

BARBARA Thelma, yes.

BOB She seems quite nice. (*He turns a page of his newspaper.*) Must be a bit boring, sitting upstairs all day. (*He glances at BARBARA.*) Still, just think; this time tomorrow, it'll all be over. She'll have gone.

The lights fade.

BARBARA *walks downstage and addresses the audience.*

During the following, STEWART enters the sitting room.

BARBARA Sunday – a really beautiful morning, almost summery, not a cloud in the sky. It must have been about eleven o'clock when Bob and Julie went out to wash a car – well, not quite eleven, the church bells were still ringing. I love the sound of church bells on Sunday mornings. I'd got a shoulder of lamb for lunch and I'd just finished doing the vegetables when Thelma came down for a cup of coffee. We went into the sitting room and stood there, by the window. I thought how friendly she was – not at all what I imagined a police girl would be like. Then Julie came in for some clean water and told us about her friend Maureen Chapman – apparently there'd been some sort of domestic disaster; she'd let the bath overflow and the hall ceiling needed redecorating – Julie asked if she could go round after lunch and help, and of course I said yes. Thelma and I were both talking, laughing, saying what a mess it must have been, when Thelma suddenly looked out of the window. I looked out too, I don't know why, I just did. Helen's front door was open and somebody was coming out of the house. It was a man. I'd never seen him before. He didn't look round to say goodbye, he just hurried to the gate and went off along the road. He had disappeared before I realised who it was. Thelma turned to me and said, "Did you see what I saw?" I couldn't speak. I just nodded. It was the man in the photograph, the man Mr Stewart was looking for. Thelma went to make a phone

call. I just stood there, by the window. I could hear Julie laughing and talking as she cleaned the car. The church bells were still ringing. Although I didn't know what it meant, I felt sure something terrible had happened. Then Thelma came back. "Mr Stewart's coming to see you this afternoon," she said, "it's very important. Don't tell Julie." (*brief pause*) Somehow I forced myself to eat some lunch. The meat kept turning and turning in my mouth. I couldn't swallow. When Julie went off to paint Maureen's ceiling, I told Bob what had happened. He gave me a hug. "Don't worry," he said, "there's nothing to worry about." But as he held me in his arms, I could feel his hands trembling.

The lights come up. Afternoon.

BARBARA *walks directly into the sitting room, where BOB and STEWART are awaiting.*

STEWART You actually saw this man yourself, Mrs Jackson?

BARBARA Yes, I did.

STEWART You saw him come out of number forty-five Cranley Drive and hurry away along the road?

BARBARA Yes.

STEWART And you're quite sure it was the same man - the man whose photograph I showed you?

BARBARA Yes, oh yes.

STEWART Yes, I see. (*He turns to BOB.*) Well, it seems you missed all the excitement, Mr Jackson. You were cleaning your car, I believe?

BOB Yes.

STEWART Just here, in front of your house?

BOB Yes.

STEWART Yes, well...you can see how easy it is for him to come and go without being observed. Amazing isn't it?