

Thelma

THELMA *enters and addresses the audience: she is in her late twenties, a sturdily built ex-regular army girl; she wears a sweater and slacks.*

THELMA I noticed that everything had been tidied away; the furniture smelt of lavender polish and there was a vase of fresh flowers on the hall table; it was as if the house had been put on its best behaviour. I went upstairs, to the daughter's bedroom. There was a half-empty mug of coffee, still warm, on the bedside table. On the chest of drawers, a tin of Max Factor talcum powder stood beside a bottle of perfume, shaped like a cat. Holiday postcards from friends were stuck around the mirror. There was a portable gramophone and some records: Roy Orbison and the Everley Brothers. She was reading *Wuthering Heights*. I could hear the Jacksons moving and talking downstairs. They were talking quietly because there was a stranger in the house. *(brief pause)* The day passed uneventfully, and when I left, at half-past five, Mrs Jackson asked me if I had been comfortable. I couldn't help smiling. Surveillance jobs usually mean spending hours, if not days, in cold empty rooms – or, worse, crouched in the back of a van. "Yes, thanks," I said, "very nice," I said, "very comfortable."

THELMA *exits.*

The lights come up. Evening.

BARBARA and **BOB** are seated in armchairs in the sitting room. **BARBARA** is sewing; **BOB** is reading a newspaper. The electric fire casts a cosy glow across the hearth. *Pause.* **BOB** yawns and turns a page of his newspaper.

BARBARA I wonder where he is?

BOB *(without looking up)* Who?

BARBARA The man they're looking for.

No response; brief pause.