

ACT ONE

Overture

(The actors run on and take a bow. Then frantically pull on the set for scene one.)

(Lights change.)

Scene One. Hannay's Apartment. London.

(In the centre of the stage is a large armchair, a standard lamp and a table. On the table a half empty bottle of scotch and empty glass.)

*(Seated in the armchair is **RICHARD HANNAY**. About forty. Attractive. Pencil moustache. He addresses the audience.)*

HANNAY. London. 1935. August. I'd been back three months in the old country and frankly wondering why. The weather made me liverish, no exercise to speak of and the talk of the ordinary Englishman made me sick. I'd had enough of restaurants and parties and race meetings. No pal to go about with – which probably explains things. Hoppy Byng lost in the Canadian Treasury, Tommy Deloraine married

off to a blonde heiress in Chicago, Chips Carruthers eaten by crocodiles in the Limpopo. Leaving me. Richard Hannay. Thirty-seven years old, sound in wind and limb. Back home. Which was no home at all if you want to know. Just a dull little rented flat in West One. Portland Place actually. And I was bored. No more than bored. Tired. Tired of the world and tired of – life, to be honest. So I called my broker. He wasn't in. Dropped into my club. Full of old colonial buffers. Had a scotch and soda, picked up an evening paper, put it back. Full of elections and wars and rumours of wars. And I thought – who the bloody hell cares frankly? What does it all matter? What happens to anyone? What happens to me? No-one'd miss me. I wouldn't miss me. I could quite easily just –

(He takes a slug of scotch. Knocks it back.)

And then I thought – wait a minute! Come on Hannay! Pull yourself together man!

Find something to do, you bloody fool! Something mindless and trivial. Something utterly pointless. Something –

(He has a brainwave.)

– I know! A West End show!¹ That should do the trick!

(He marches out.)

(Music: Mr. Memory Theme)

(Footlights come up)

Scene Two: Cockney Music Hall. London.