

The IRON MAIDEN

DARK ADVENTURE RADIO THEATRE: THE IRON MAIDEN

Written by

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Based on "The Venus of Ille" by Prosper Mérimée

Read-along Script

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SFX: static, radio tuning, snippet of '30s song, more tuning, static dissolves to:

Dark Adventure Radio THEME MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

Tales of intrigue, adventure, and the mysterious occult that will stir your imagination and make your very blood run cold.

MUSIC CRESCENDO.

ANNOUNCER (CONT'D)

This is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre, featuring your host, Lester Mayhew. Today's episode: "The Iron Maiden" -- a tale of archaeological madness inspired by "The Venus of Ille" by Prosper Mérimée.

MUSIC.

LESTER MAYHEW

A young archaeology professor from America travels to the Isle of Wight to research famous ruins. He unearths an ancient statue on the estate of a wealthy landowner. Will his investigation reveal an extraordinary Roman relic, the crackpot theory of an amateur, or something far more strange and inexplicably sinister?

But first, a word from our sponsor.

SPONSOR JINGLE

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

My friends, today's fast-paced world of telephones and adding machines can leave your nerves a jangled mess. Why it can even invade your dreams, and rob you of needed rest! If you sometimes can't sleep because of nervous derangement or overexcitement I have the solution for you: try Veronal.

(MORE)

LESTER MAYHEW (CONT'D)

Veronal's scientific European formulation contains soothing barbiturates to gently whisk you away to slumberland, where you can forget the cares and troubles of the day. It's the 100% safe sleep solution for the modern machine age.

MUSIC.

LULLABY SINGERS

(singing)

Take Veronal tonight and sleep--
Safe and restful sleep, sleep,
sleep.

ANNOUNCER

Take a tranquil trip to the land of dreams with Veronal, the Sandman's little helper! Ask your druggist for Veronal today.

LESTER MAYHEW

And now, Dark Adventure Radio Theatre presents "The Iron Maiden".

MUSIC redolent of the English countryside.

2

BEMBRIDGE SCHOLARS

2

LESTER MAYHEW

In the lobby of the Royal Spithead Hotel on the Isle of Wight, the illustrious Bembridge Scholars gather for a banquet to celebrate one of their own. As he limps toward the ballroom, the guest of honor seems slightly dizzy...

Fade up on HOTEL LOBBY AMBIENCE. The BELL at the desk RINGS. A CLOCK CHIMES. Perhaps an elevator door DINGS. JORDAN LOWELL is an aging astronomer.

LOWELL

Professor, are you all right? Can I get you a chair?

WARD

(old and sad)

Mmm. No thank you, Jordan. I'll be all right. Just overcome with memories.

LOWELL
Memories? Of what?

WARD
Ghosts. I've been here before. This
hotel. Decades ago.

LOWELL
Really?

TRANSITION MUSIC STARTS.

WARD
It would have been the summer of
1908. Back before Charlie first
became a student of mine. I was
sitting... right over there...
reading, as usual...

FLASHBACK MUSIC takes us back a few decades. EUSTACE MILES
and his wife HALLIE approach.

MILES
Still looking for all your answers
in a book?

WARD
(35 years old)
I beg your pardon?

MILES
I say, Ward, it is you, isn't it?

WARD
(surprised)
Miles?

MILES
Yes, I thought so. I'd know that
studious scowl anywhere.

WARD
Eustace Miles! What... what a
delightful surprise! And--

MILES
Ah, allow me to introduce my wife.
Hallie, my love, this is Nathaniel
Ward, that American professor I
mentioned to you some time ago.

HALLIE
Oh yes, charmed. Wasn't he the one
who--

MILES

Yes, we met at that Theosophical Society conference at King's College. Ward, this is my wife, Harriet.

WARD

So nice to meet you, Mrs. Miles.

HALLIE

Call me Hallie, Professor. All my friends do.

WARD

Hallie, yes. And Miles, allow me to congratulate you on your medal!

MILES

Ah, yes, thank you.

HALLIE

You're a tennis enthusiast, Professor Ward?

WARD

Oh no, I'm not much for sports - I just follow the Red Stockings and my university's teams. But, well, the whole world was captivated by the Olympics. A scholar and a world-class athlete! You must be very proud of your husband, Hallie.

HALLIE

It wasn't easy to lose to an American.

MILES

Tosh! I've let that go.

HALLIE

(he hasn't)
Of course you have, dear.

WARD

There's no shame in a silver medal!

MILES

(changing the subject)
What brings you to Bembridge, Ward? Whatever are you reading now... "*De mirabilibus mundi*"? That's no holiday brochure.

WARD

Ah, no. I'm due on campus next week for the new term, but before I go back I'm here hoping to take a look at some of the island's Roman ruins. I've been waiting to hear about final arrangements.

MILES

Ruins? Which ones? I heard something about finds in the Solent near Yarmouth.

WARD

Ah, well, I've been hoping to see the mosaics at the Brading Villa on the Oglander estate.

HALLIE

(gasping)
No! You're not!

WARD

What's that?

HALLIE

That's just where we're going!

WARD

What?! But how--

MILES

Lord Oglander is an old friend of Hallie's parents. His son is getting married Friday and we're here for the wedding.

HALLIE

Mother and Father are too ill to travel, so we've come in their stead.

MILES

What fortuitous timing!

WARD

Yes! Quite the coincidence. A wedding... that would explain why my letters haven't gotten an answer.

MILES

What are you hoping to learn at Brading Villa? Looking into something specific?

WARD

Yes, I've been looking into a classical poem about... mer-men, you could call them, and the mosaics on Oglander's estate depict something along those lines.

MILES

And you want to shoot it all down, I suppose?

WARD

Well, I--

MILES

Last time I saw Ward, Hallie, he was going toe to toe with William Butler Yeats. Said his fascination with the occult was... what was the word you used? Childish? Primitive?

WARD

Atavistic.

HALLIE

Oh my!

MILES

Mr. Yeats was not best pleased.

WARD

I'm a scientist, Mrs. Miles. Or at least I try to be. I view the "supernatural" from a rational point of view.

HALLIE

And you get on with my husband? Have you seen his most recent book?

WARD

I haven't had that pleasure.

HALLIE

"Life After Life". All about reincarnation. Delightfully metaphysical.

WARD

Ah. I'm sure it's fascinating.

MILES

Ward has his views, my dear, and I have mine. As gentlemen we can disagree without being disagreeable.

WARD

Well said, Miles. Hm, I can't imagine the Oglanders could accommodate a visiting scholar with a wedding going on. I should probably just head back to Arkham now. Have a wonderful time.

MILES

Nonsense, old chap! You'll come with us. It will be jolly fun.

WARD

Oh, I don't want to be a third wheel.

HALLIE

Lord Oglander will be delighted to have you, Professor. He fancies himself a gentleman archaeologist in his own right. He lives to show off his villa.

WARD

No, I'll just get in the way.

MILES

If anyone gets in the way it will be Oglander getting in yours. Trust us. You simply must come along.

HALLIE

Do say yes, Professor.

MUSIC TRANSITION.

3

NARRATION

3

LESTER MAYHEW

That evening, Eustace and Hallie Miles brought Nate Ward to the Oglander Estate....

LORD OGLANDER, 57, is a kooky country squire with a short attention span who loves the sound of his own voice.

OGLANDER

Ah, yes! Ward, from America! I've had your letters awaiting me on my desk! Meant to reply ages ago. The mosaics, of course. Frightfully sorry! My correspondence has been neglected in favor of these beastly wedding preparations.

WARD

Of course, no apology ne--

OGLANDER

(laughing)

Clever of you to come round all the same, what? Grab the bull by the horns, I always say, don't I, Fanny?

LADY OGLANDER

You're always saying something, dear.

HALLIE

Lady Oglander, we hope you don't mind us arriving a little early, but when we met with the Professor at the Spithead...

LADY OGLANDER

(dry sarcasm)

Of course, Hallie dear. Quite right. I mean, the wedding isn't for another... forty-two hours.

OGLANDER

Yes, nothing but time! Ward, this gracious dominatrix is my wife, the Lady Oglander.

WARD

Lady Oglander, I am sorry if--

OGLANDER

She has everything well in hand, never you fear. And that scintillating slab of beef over in the corner is my son, Alfred. The impending groom!

HALLIE

Hello Alfred! We haven't seen you since you were just a boy!

MILES

You're looking well, old chap!
Excited?

There is a sullen PAUSE.

ALFRED

(sullenly)

I suppose.

OGLANDER

Speak up, boy! You remember the Killicks, don't you? This is their daughter, Harriet! And her husband, Eustace Miles. The most ripping tennis player. Well, second most. Shame about the American.

MILES

Yes, he--

OGLANDER

Ah well, a silver medal is something, eh Miles?

MILES

You're too kind, your lordship.

FOOTSTEPS as a butler, CHALVERS, enters.

CHALVERS

Dinner is served, sir.

OGLANDER

Ah, Chalvers! Set three more places for our guests.

CHALVERS

(surprised)

Sir?

LADY OGLANDER

Stansfield, we--

OGLANDER

Nonsense! The pantry is groaning with food! Weeks they've been cooking. You could feed an army with the cakes alone!

WARD

I'm clearly intruding, I'll just head back--

OGLANDER

Balderdash! I won't hear of it.

LADY OGLANDER

Perhaps it would be--

OGLANDER

Ward here is from Miskatonic University. A distinguished scholar of archaeology? I'll not have him turned away from my door! Ward, you'll stay for dinner and the wedding too!

LADY OGLANDER

Stansfield!

OGLANDER

Alfred doesn't mind. Do you, boy?

ALFRED

(noncommittal grunt)

WARD

I didn't... I never--

MILES

(laughing)

Cheer up, Ward. I knew we could count on you, Lord Oglander!

LADY OGLANDER

(resigned)

Chalvers, it seems there will be three more places.

CHALVERS

Very good, ma'am.

HE GOES.

LADY OGLANDER

(unhappy)

Hallie, Eustace, won't you follow me? I'm sure my husband can keep the professor engaged.

They go.

OGLANDER

Really, professor, I do feel terrible about not replying to your letters. I shall ignore you no longer! You are in my house, and I shall not rest until you have seen the mosaics, and all the other antiquities of the island into the bargain. You'll be astonished by what I've got here.

WARD

That is most kind you, sir, but this is just a preliminary survey. I can manage by myself. And besides, I wouldn't dream of taking you away from your domestic affairs.

OGLANDER

Ah, this boy's marriage? That is all nonsense. It takes place the day after tomorrow. Despite all my wife's many preparations it will be a subdued affair.

(sotto)

The bride's aunt is recently deceased. So, no receiving line nor ball. Pity. You would have seen our Wihtware women dance. We have some pretty lasses, and you might be tempted to follow Alfred's example. One marriage, they say, leads to others. Are you married, Professor Ward?

WARD

Uh... no.

OGLANDER

Of course not; you are not a frivolous man. You take no notice of women! You must forgive us for the irksomeness of a country wedding. To an American academic... and a wedding without a ball too! All my wife's planning in the bin. Well, I for one could do with an added guest, and one who appreciates antiquities at that. We'll have a splendid time, you and I, Ward, a splendid time!

MUSIC transitions us to...

We FADE IN on the CLINKING OF DISHES and a half-joke.

OGLANDER
 (delighted with himself)
 ...so the philologist said, he
 conjugated when he should have
 declined!

Oglander and Miles LAUGH with gusto. The others not so much.
 Ward has heard this one before.

LADY OGLANDER
 (mortified)
 Oh, Stansfield....

WARD
 Hah. Yes, very good. Although of
 course Oedipus was Greek....

HALLIE
 Professor Ward, that Latin book you
 were reading at the hotel, is that
 what brings you here to the Brading
 villa?

WARD
 In a sense. Last year I had the
 opportunity to examine some
 recently acquired ancient Roman
 documents at the Widener Library at
 Harvard. I found a very queer poem
 among them that made reference to
 "Insula Vecta"--

OGLANDER
 By Jove, the Isle of Wight!

WARD
 Yes, exactly.

OGLANDER
 And what was this poem, pray tell?

WARD
 Well, it was only fragment by
 Solinus, but it was a tale of fish-
 men who lived beneath the sea, and
 who would never die.

MILES
 Never die, you say?

WARD

Yes, Miles. Right up your alley.
And I knew your mosaics depicted
creatures like those described in
the verse--

OGLANDER

--which would have been written at
about the same time. I begin to
understand your interest. Alfred,
tell professor Ward when the villa
was erected.

ALFRED

(quietly)
Please, father, don't...

OGLANDER

Speak up!

ALFRED

(pointed)
A million years ago.

OGLANDER

(undaunted)
Not quite. The site was first
occupied by the 2nd Augusta Legion
under Vespasian. The first simple
Roman buildings date from 44 anno
domini, but over the next one
hundred years the villa grew
handsomely around the central
courtyard. That's when the mosaics
were laid down.

WARD

Do you know by whom, Lord Oglander?
I've only seen a handful of
photographs, and--

OGLANDER

I have a theory on that, Ward. They
bear a great similarity to mosaics
in Antioch, and it may well be that
Palladius, the former *magister*
officiorum of that city, might have
built them when he was banished to
Britain in three hundred aught
nine.

WARD

Really? Are you sure you're not confusing him with Palladius the Hermit? The desert-dwelling ascetic canonized by the Eastern Catholic Church? He lived near Antioch--

LADY OGLANDER

(delighted)

Careful, Stansfield. It would seem you may have met your match.

Hallie and Miles CHUCKLE.

WARD

Forgive me, Lady Oglander. I didn't mean to talk shop all night. This chicken is wonderful. My compliments to your cook!

OGLANDER

Whoever built them, and whenever they were built, they were obscured when the villa burned down in the fourth century. It wasn't until 1879 that they were rediscovered by a local farmer named Munns. It's a wonder he didn't plow them into pieces. He was my mother's neighbor, and she bought his land in order to preserve the discovery. We've been entrusted with their safekeeping ever since, what?

HALLIE

And a wonderful job you've made of it, Lord Oglander.

MILES

Hear hear!

WARD

Yes, the world owes you a debt of gratitude, your lordship. All of you, Lady Oglander. And you too, Alfred.

ALFRED

Lucky me.

MUSIC.

6

IN FOR THE NIGHT

6

FADING IN on Oglander leading Hallie, Miles and Ward down a stone hallway.

OGLANDER

Chalvers already brought up your trunk and valise. This will be your room, Hallie, Miles. Come along, Rachel, don't stand there gawking, show them in!

RACHEL, 20ish, is one of the housemaids. She speaks with a working-class accent.

RACHEL

(flustered)

Yes, your lordship. Begging your pardon, mister... missus Miles. Sir. It's just in here. Madame.

The CREAK of a castle door and FOOTSTEPS ON STONE as they all enter.

HALLIE

Oh it's lovely, Lord Oglander. Thank you.

OGLANDER

Piffle, it's nothing!

RACHEL

Forgive me, we're still preparing for guests to arrive. Hadn't yet gotten to-- oh, let me clear off this basin and fetch fresh wa--

CROCKERY SMASHES as she drops a water pitcher.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Oh, bless me!

OGLANDER

Rex infernus, girl! What have you done?

MILES

Are you hurt?

RACHEL

I'm sorry, your lordship. I--

HALLIE

It's all right, Rachel. It's only a pitcher. Isn't that right, Lord Oglander?

RACHEL

(upset)

I'll go fetch another. Begging your pardon.

She RUSHES OUT.

OGLANDER

Lumpish girl....

HALLIE

I think she may have been a little distracted by my husband's athletic virility.

MILES

Ha! It's my curse!

HALLIE

And mine!

OGLANDER

I do apologize. I'm sure our accommodations seem humble, and our servants uncouth to distinguished Londoners, not to mention an American, what?

HALLIE

Not at all! It's splendid, your lordship.

OGLANDER

Your room is just across the hall, Professor. Let me show you, before Rachel returns and breaks your arm.

Some MORE FOOTSTEPS AND CREAKING as a door opens onto an enormous castle chamber. MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

WARD

Oh my! It's palatial! I never--

OGLANDER

I can only hope it will suffice. What it lacks in sophistication I hope you'll agree it compensates for in its view.

(MORE)

OGLANDER (CONT'D)

In daylight tomorrow you'll see the meadow and the tennis courts just outside this window, and beyond them, the ruins! You can begin your studies from here at dawn!

Miles enters Ward's room.

MILES

I say, Ward, not too shabby, eh?

WARD

It's quite wonderful, Lord Oglander. You're too kind.

OGLANDER

Nonsense, my honored guest! Now just between us men, down the hall is the chamber of Venus, where my son and his new bride will spend their wedding night.

(a lascivious chuckle)

My boy may not be studious, but he is a vigorous specimen! I hope his marital enthusiasms won't keep you awake, eh what?

The men try to share a knowing laugh. Hallie enters.

HALLIE

What's all this then?

OGLANDER

Just delighting in the companionship of my guests. Tomorrow morning, Professor, you'll be at your work! Exciting, what? Good night, Mrs. Miles! Gentlemen.

HALLIE

Good night, your lordship. Thank you so much.

HE GOES. The immense door CREAKS SHUT. Hallie and Miles LAUGH.

WARD

Well I'm glad you're amused. What have you two gotten me into? Marital enthusiasms?

MILES

I'd be amazed to see enthusiasm of any kind from that lad.

HALLIE

Now, now, boys. He's led a sheltered life. I suspect he'll rise to the occasion.

MUSIC.

7 NARRATION

7

LESTER MAYHEW

The next morning, in the quiet of a misty dawn, Ward and Miles surveyed the ancient Roman mosaics with the help of an old site map Ward found among the trove of Roman documents at the Widener Library....

8 THE RUINS

8

MILES

Well, Ward? Now aren't you glad we brought you here?

WARD

It's stupendous, Miles, truly. Nothing better than an ancient site with no--

OGLANDER

(off, approaching)

Ahoy! Scoundrels! You begin the work without me?

MILES

You were about to say?

Oglander STRIDES UP, huffing and puffing.

OGLANDER

Hallie told me you were already out here, gentlemen. Luckily for us my wife has conscripted her for the pursuits of the fairer sex, leaving us men free to enlarge our minds.

MILES

Good of you to join us, your lordship.

WARD

Yes, we--

OGLANDER

Now let me show you around. I see you've already found our mer-men. It was the mer-men you were most interested in, wasn't it, Ward?

WARD

Yes. I think they might--

OGLANDER

I have a theory about them. But you must promise you won't divulge it before I can publish a paper on the subject. You must leave us poor amateurs a few glories. You professional academics have enough.

WARD

Of course.

MILES

What's the theory, your lordship?

OGLANDER

I believe that before the Romans occupied this site, it was a pagan temple.

WARD

Interesting...

OGLANDER

Oh yes. It was the scene of shocking rituals involving torture and human sacrifice, and the creation of unholy hybrids between humans and other creatures. These mosaics are the documentation of these infernal practices!

WARD

Lord Oglander, that's....

OGLANDER

You know the pagan tale of Glaucus, the fisherman who became part fish, and lived immortally in the sea thereafter?

WARD

Of course. Ovid tells how he found
a magical herb that brought the
fish he caught back to life, and
when he ate it himself he grew fins
and a tail. But, forgive me sir,
that's just a myth. A poem. These
mosaics are not to be taken
literally. They're metaphorical.

OGLANDER

Ah, but are they? When my mother
bought this land, there was a rumor
that there was a pagan statue here.
The idol of an ancient temple, with
a fierce beauty no man could
resist. A prehistoric Venus!

WARD

A statue, you say?

OGLANDER

Yes. It was part of what intrigued
my mother. She was herself rather
indomitable.

MILES

Ward, I recognize that look of
yours. What are you thinking?

WARD

The Solinus poem that brought me
here contains lines about a "cruel
beauty." I assumed it would be
another figure in the mosaics,
perhaps one yet to be discovered.
But if it was a statue... if this
entire villa was built over an Iron
Age Celtic ritual location, then
most likely it would have been...

MUSIC OF THRILLING DISCOVERY. He unfurls the map.

WARD (CONT'D)

See here on this diagram, this
notation here....

MILES

What, "cave complex"? Do you know
of any caves on the site, Lord
Oglander?

OGLANDER

Caves? I've never heard of any--

WARD

But what if this phrase isn't English? If it's Latin, it's not "cave complex." It's "*cave complexum*"...

MILES

"Beware"--

OGLANDER

"Beware... her embrace."

MILES

By Jove!

MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

WARD

Lord Oglander, this location here, where would it be on the grounds?

OGLANDER

Well, we're standing... here, so it would be... just over there, between the stables and the tennis court! Good Lord! Could it be?

WARD

Come on, Miles!

OGLANDER

Yes, follow me!

MUSIC. The three men RUSH THROUGH THE GRASS.

MILES

There must be some shovels we can lay hands on, Lord Oglander?

OGLANDER

(wheezing)

Yes, of course, but I'm afraid the good Lady Oglander would be truly aggrieved if I permitted her guests to undertake... undertaking.

(calling out)

Evans! I say, Evans! I need you!

EVANS, 40-something, has a working-class accent. He emerges from the stables.

EVANS

(off)

Your Lordship! Are you all right?

OGLANDER

(to Ward and Miles)

My groundskeeper, Evans.

(to Evans)

Yes, Evans. Bring shovels and picks and what have you. We must do a little excavation.

EVANS

I beg your pardon, sir?

OGLANDER

Yes, yes. Get some of the stable boys to assist you. Don't stand there! Get help! Now where should we begin, Professor Ward?

WARD

Are you sure you want to... I mean, we could wait, until after the wedding to--

OGLANDER

Audaces fortuna juvat, Ward.
Fortune favors the bold!

MILES

(laughing)

Now you've done it, my friend!

Some HUBBUB as Evans and a couple of STABLE BOYS come over.
Some CLANKING OF TOOLS.

OGLANDER

Come on, lads.

EVANS

Right sir. Here's Tommy and George.
You wanted us to dig, sir?

OGLANDER

Well, Professor? Don't keep my men waiting!

WARD

Well... I suppose... there would seem to be a slight tumulus here. It might just be due to the roots of that tree, but we have to start somewhere.

MUSIC.

9 NARRATION

9

LESTER MAYHEW

For more than an hour the workmen delved in the earth while Lord Oglander did his best to assuage his wife's wrath. Spectators from neighboring farms stopped by to watch the unfolding excavation. Suddenly...

10 UNEARTHED

10

TOMMY

(freaked out)
Lord save us!

EVANS

What is it, Tommy?

WARD

What have you found?

TOMMY

It's a hand! My god, it's a human hand!

EVANS

A dead body! Your lordship!

HUBBUB among the bystanders who have gathered.

OGLANDER

Steady on!

EVANS

Tommy's found a dead body, your lordship!

HALLIE

Oh my word! Professor, is it--

LADY OGLANDER

Good lord! Now will you stop this madness, Stansfield?

OGLANDER

What, now? It's just getting interesting, Fanny!

TOMMY

It's the work of the devil! It's all black and rotting!

WARD

(very excited)

It's all right, Tommy. Look here.
You've done it! It's not a dead
body!

(tapping the hand with a
shovel - CLANG)

It's a statue! See? I think it's
iron.

TOMMY

It's not right!

WARD

No, listen. We'll just clear some
more of this dirt away. Give us a
hand, Evans.

DIGGING. Faint ringing as Ward taps the statue again. More
witnesses gather on the lawn.

TOMMY

The hand... it's a full arm. I
think it's the whole lady!

EVANS

Well done, lad.

WARD

Yes, Tommy. Well done!

MILES

And well done you, Ward! What a
discovery!

WARD

Careful now. Clear this soil out.

MORE HUBBUB.

OGLANDER

(calling out)

Right, men! All hands gather
'round! Now we've found her, we've
got to get her out!

MILES

Hand me a shovel, I'll dig!

WARD

Yes, I'll take one too!

LADY OGLANDER
 (scandalized)
 Gentlemen, please. Let the staff
 handle the... digging.

MILES
 She's right, Ward, you should be
 documenting all this. Finish your
 map and sketches. Hallie, help him,
 won't you?

HALLIE
 Yes, Professor, leave it to Eustace
 and the others.

WARD
 But I--

MILES
 Alfred! Give us a hand here!

OGLANDER
 Yes, boy, don't just stand there
 like a clod! Make yourself useful!

ALFRED
 What do you want me to do?

OGLANDER
 Pick up a shovel and pitch in, of
 course!

ALFRED
 Me? I'm getting married tomorrow.

LADY OGLANDER
 Quite right.

EVANS
 Come on, now. Let's get her out of
 there.

MORE HUBBUB as other diggers start to work.

WARD
 Careful now! This is a priceless
 bit of antiquity we're unearthing.

OGLANDER
 Be gentle with her, men! Look
 alive!

HUBBUB AND MUSIC.

11 NARRATION

11

LESTER MAYHEW

Hours later, the statue was nearly disinterred. Under Nate Ward's direction, the groundskeeper rigged a block and tackle from the branches of the nearby tree....

12 DISINTERMENT

12

SOME HUBBUB from bystanders who are still watching.

WARD

Keep the line taut, Evans. Tommy, that rope's tight around her?

TOMMY

Tight as I can make it, sir. Cor but she's a knobby old thing, in't she?

ALFRED

Perfectly hideous. Well done, Tommy.

WARD

Right! George and Tommy, you push up from below, while we hoist on the rope. Ready?

TOMMY

(unsure)
I suppose, Professor.

WARD

Lord Oglander, will you be so kind as to coordinate?

OGLANDER

Certainly! Look lively, men! To your posts!

LADY OGLANDER

Stansfield, let the workmen handle this!

OGLANDER

Stand back, Fanny! Don't distract me now. And heave ho, men!

MUSIC. EFFORTS. CREAKING BRANCH AND ROPE.

TOMMY
Cor blimey, but she's heavy!

WARD
Careful!

OGLANDER
Look lively! And heave! Swing her
over to the edge, men!

EVANS
Let us get a purchase!

ALFRED
It's too heavy.

HALLIE
Do be careful, Eustace!

MILES
(straining)
It's all right, dear.

THE ROPE CREAKS OMINOUSLY. MUSICAL THRILL.

OGLANDER
Mind how you go!

LADY OGLANDER
Stansfield, be careful!

OGLANDER
Fanny, please, not now! Nearly
vertical now. Just a bit more!

WARD
Yes, on the grass!

OGLANDER
Tommy, George, up and out if you
please.

HALLIE
I think you've got it!

EVANS
Step up, boys!

MILES
Careful Ward! She's starting to
swing!

EVANS
Mind the rope!

OGLANDER
Catch her, men! Catch her!

THE ROPE SNAPS! METAL GROANS! MUSIC! Dialogue overlaps.

HALLIE
Eustace!

LADY OGLANDER
Stansfield, look out!

EVANS
Tommy! George, get out of the--

The statue keels over and lands on Tommy!

TOMMY
Aaaah! My leg!

ALFRED
(suddenly alarmed)
Tommy?!

WARD
Oh my god! Miles, help me!

MILES
The rope snapped!

EVANS
Double-braided jute, that was!

OGLANDER
Everyone! Help! Get it off him!

WARD
Careful! Not too fast!

EFFORTS as numerous people jump in to help shift the statue.

TOMMY
AAAAAAH!!!

EVANS
Georgie, pull him out from under!

OGLANDER
Grab his shoulders, men!

GEORGE
Lift higher! He's stuck!

LADY OGLANDER
Stansfield, do something!

ALFRED
Get him out! Hold on, Tommy!

WARD
Carefully! Carefully!

MILES
Hallie, here... we've got him!

TOMMY
AAAAAHHH!

EVANS
And lift!

OGLANDER
Heave!

MILES
He's clear!

WARD
Oh my god.

ALFRED
Tommy, are you all right?

TOMMY
(whimpers in pain)

MILES
That leg looks broken to me.

HALLIE
I'm afraid so.

LADY OGLANDER
Broken?! Well, Stansfield, I trust
you're satisfied at last?

OGLANDER
Fanny, I--

LADY OGLANDER
Chalvers! Evans! Take Tommy into
the house at once. Rachel! Run to
the village and get Doctor Chapman!

RACHEL
Ma'am.

ALFRED
I can do it.

LADY OGLANDER

(shocked)

Alfred? No, let the staff attend to...

ALFRED

I'll drive the motorcoach. It's the fastest way to get to the village.

HUBBUB as Tommy is attended to.

TOMMY

Aaaaah! My leg!

HALLIE

Don't try to move it--

EVANS

Here lad, take a sip from my flask.

Tommy DRINKS.

ALFRED

Tommy, I... Well that's just fine, isn't it? Now... who am I supposed to play tennis with?

LADY OGLANDER

Oh Alfred! Haven't you better things to think about?

ALFRED

He was the only one on this whole blasted estate who was any good at all!

LADY OGLANDER

Go and fetch Dr. Chapman.

(he goes and she turns to the gathered crowd)

And the rest of you, get back to your work. We have guests arriving in hours, and there's still a wedding tomorrow, heaven help us all.

WARD

Lady Oglander, I'm so sorry. I never... the rope was--

LADY OGLANDER

Oh I don't blame you, Professor.

WARD

That's... still I--

LADY OGLANDER

Don't worry, Dr. Chapman will sort the boy out. Come with me, Hallie. Clearly it's time for us to intervene.

OGLANDER

George, fetch a pail to clean the statue--

LADY OGLANDER

Stansfield! I **know** you have better things to think about! Now if you gentlemen will excuse us, we have things to see to. George, fill in that hole. We don't want the Dowdswells to see this catastrophe.

GEORGE

Yes ma'am.

Lady Oglander sweeps out, with HUBBUB as everyone goes back to wedding preparations, leaving Ward, Miles and Oglander to examine the statue. Hallie lingers a moment.

HALLIE

You sure you're all right, Eustace?

MILES

Yes, of course, dear. Better not keep her ladyship waiting.

HALLIE

Yes. I'm so sorry, Professor Ward. The statue is...

(searching for the right word)

...grand. Well done.

WARD

Thank you. I feel terrible.

HALLIE

You needn't. It was an accident. Now that she's out of the ground, you gentlemen might as well finish what you started. You stay and study her. I'll try to smooth things over inside.

MILES

Thank you, my love.

SMOOCHES. Hallie goes inside.

WARD

Your wife is remarkable, Miles.

MILES

I know.

OGLANDER

A veritable Venus! Do you see?

MILES

Thank you, Lord Oglander.

OGLANDER

What? No, the statue! Come come, Miles! If you want a stirring example of womanhood, it stands before you! Take her in.

MILES

(chuckling)

Yes, of course, your Lordship. All right, Ward, what do you think? She's iron, no? Isn't bronze more typical?

WARD

Bronze does tend to survive better. Iron is so much more susceptible to corrosion.

OGLANDER

She's miraculous!

WARD

Yes, top part of the body bare, just as the ancients usually depicted their great deities...

OGLANDER

See the hands, how delicately they are rendered. The right raised up to her breast, bent palm inwards, the thumb and two first fingers extended, whilst the other two are slightly curved.

MILES

(amused)

Looks like she's missing her cigarette! Good thing she's using that other hand to hold up her skirts!

OGLANDER

Miles, please! Don't be profane.

WARD

Interesting... look at the size of the head, those proportions look more Greek than Roman.

MILES

I'm not the expert you men are, but... her face? Is something wrong with it?

OGLANDER

Wrong?!

WARD

I think I see what you mean. It is quite different from any other antique statue I can call to mind.

MILES

That expression - it's slightly diabolical.

OGLANDER

Miles, how dare you speak of my Venus that way! She's beautiful!

MILES

I don't know. She seems very... angry. Even wicked.

WARD

Her features are a little contracted: the eyes are rather slanting, the mouth turned up at the corners, and the nostrils somewhat inflated.

MILES

That's the face of disdain... irony... even cruelty.

WARD

There is something ferocious in her expression, and yet, Lord Oglander, you're right. She is beautiful.

OGLANDER

(pleased)

It is Venus herself gloating over her prey!

WARD

Ah yes, poor Tommy! I hope he'll be all right.

OGLANDER

(laughing)

Wounded by Venus, sir. The rascal complains of being wounded by Venus! '*Veneris nec praemia nôris.*'

MILES

"Who has not suffered from the wounds of Venus?"

OGLANDER

If my Venus had broken my own leg I should not have minded. Look at her eyes!

WARD

It's a silver inlay, contrasting with the patina of age. So lifelike. Almost makes you feel embarrassed to look into them.

MILES

I wonder if a living person can be reincarnated as an inanimate object...

(amused)

Ward, are you blushing? I thought you were a professional!

WARD

Yes, I--

OGLANDER

And she confirms my theory! She's neither Greek nor Roman. She's Phoenician!

WARD

Phoenician?! In England? That's highly unlike--

MILES
(laughs)

OGLANDER
On the other side of this island is a hamlet called Bouldnor. They've found a number of older pre-Roman relics off the shore there. The name "Bouldnor" is simply a corruption of the word "Baal".

WARD
The Phoenician word for "god"?

OGLANDER
Precisely! This Venus was the local goddess of the ancient Phoenicians of Bouldnor! Mer-men if ever there were any!

MILES
That is quite a theory!

WARD
I'm sorry but I don't see the connection. Even if your derivation is correct, how did it end up here? Didn't you say Bouldnor is on the other side of the--

OGLANDER
Look at her. Look into her eyes. She seduced them with her beauty!

WARD
(diplomatically)
It is a splendid piece of work, but we--

A DISTANT BELL RINGS.

LADY OGLANDER
(bellowing from very far off)
Stansfield!

OGLANDER
Ah, gentlemen, that will be luncheon! Best to humor Lady Oglander, and attend.

MUSIC.

13 NARRATION

13

LESTER MAYHEW

After lunch, Lord Oglander was conscripted by his wife to assist with wedding preparations. He instructed Alfred to entertain Ward and Miles for the afternoon.

14 THE RING

14

OUTDOOR AMBIENCE.

WARD

If it's all the same to you, Alfred, what I'd really like to do is get back to work on the statue.

ALFRED

Of course you would. Father will never let any of us hear the end of that statue. His own private Venus! There will be nothing but time for that.

WARD

Yes, for you perhaps, but I--

ALFRED

Ugh! Very well.
(a spark of life)
Ah, but we're near the stables. Let me show you a really interesting piece of metal! This way.

MUSIC. FOOTSTEPS. NERVOUS HORSES as they enter the stables.

MILES

What's all this then?

ALFRED

It's under here.

The WHOOSH of a large cloth being pulled away to reveal something.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

Now here's some beautiful ironwork!

MILES

I say!

WARD

It's enormous.

MILES

Is that a Siddeley Wolseley?

ALFRED

Yes. A landau just like the Queen's, but newer! Vertical engine, four speed gearbox. There's more than twice the horsepower in this machine than in all the animals in this stable combined. And I've won many a race on these beasts.

WARD

It's a beautiful motor car, Alfred.

ALFRED

I bought it for Emily. My bride to be.

MILES

Well that's a fine gift.

ALFRED

You'll meet her tonight. She and her parents are coming for dinner. I wonder if you will think her pretty. Everybody here and at Southampton thinks her lovely. She is very wealthy. Her aunt, who lived at West End, left her all her money. Oh, they say I'll be ever so happy!

MILES

I say, Alfred, isn't your father rich enough already?

ALFRED

What?

WARD

I'm sure she's a very nice young woman.

ALFRED

Here, Professor, what do you think of this ring I'm going to give her tomorrow? I wear it here on my little finger for safe-keeping.

WARD

(working hard to be
diplomatic)

My goodness. That's a very poetic
design, isn't it? Two hands
clasping each other. Take a look,
Miles.

MILES

(dry)

Yes, dazzling. Ah, an inscription -
"Semper ab ti"?

WARD

"Ever thine."

ALFRED

Oh. I thought it was the name of
the jeweler.

WARD

It looks like an antique, although
I'd guess those diamonds were added
later.

ALFRED

Oh, it's much more impressive now.
There are two thousand five hundred
pounds worth of diamonds in it. My
mother gave it me. It was worn by
my grandmother, who had it from her
grandmother. Been in the family for
ages.

MILES

These days the custom in London is
to give a very plain ring, usually
made of two different metals, say,
gold and platinum. Now the ring
you're wearing on that finger would
be most suitable. This one is so
large that no glove would go over
the diamonds.

ALFRED

Oh, Emily can arrange that as she
likes. She should be pleased enough
to have it - twenty-five hundred
pounds on one's finger is very
pleasing.

(slightly conspiratorial)

This other little ring was given me
in London, when I was staying there
two years ago.

WARD

Oh?

ALFRED

Ah, London! That's the place to
enjoy oneself in!

MILES

Did you think of taking your
honeymoon there?

ALFRED

What? I can't imagine London would
be much fun with my bride in tow.

MILES

Oh, Alfred.

A horse WHINNIES. MUSIC.

15 NARRATION

15

LESTER MAYHEW

That evening, the bride and her
parents arrived at the Oglander
estate.

16 THE DINNER

16

A VIOLINIST PLAYS classical music in the background as the
guests arrive. We HEAR THE OGLANDERS GREETING THE DOWDSWELLS
in the background as Hallie, Miles and Ward talk quietly
amongst themselves.

HALLIE

Sorry, boys, I know you'd both
rather be studying Lord Oglander's
Venus, but I just couldn't get you
out of this.

MILES

Thank you, my darling, for saving
us for as long as you have.

WARD

Yes, Hallie. And thank you, Miles,
for the loan of the bowtie. The
Dowdswells must think I look like a
hobo.

HALLIE

You're the very picture of an American academic, Professor.

WARD

I'm not sure there's any difference!

The Oglanders and Dowdswells approach. THEODORE and MARY DOWDSELL are in their late 40s.

OGLANDER

...and this is Harriet Miles and her husband, Eustace. You'll remember her father from the club.

THEODORE DOWDSWELL

Ah yes! You're Roger Killick's little girl? Hasn't she grown, Mary?

MARY DOWDSWELL

Just lovely, dear. So nice to see you.

HALLIE

My pleasure entirely, Mrs. Dowdswell. My husband, Eustace Miles.

MILES

Madam, Sir. How do you do? Please permit me to introduce an old friend, Professor Nathaniel Ward. He's visiting us from America.

WARD

Hello.

THEODORE DOWDSWELL

(frosty)

Ah. I see. This is my daughter, Emily.

HALLIE

Emily, you look beautiful. I'm so pleased to meet you.

MILES

Yes indeed. Alfred is a lucky fellow.

ALFRED

Yes. Yes I am.

EMILY

(entirely charming)
 Good evening, Alfred. I understand
 you brought some unusual excitement
 to the grounds today, Professor
 Ward.

WARD

Oh, well I didn't mean to. It was
 all quite spontaneous.

ALFRED

Pfft! It took hours!

OGLANDER

As I explained to my wife, when
 scientific discovery beckons a man
 cannot stand idly by.

EMILY

I'm looking forward to hearing all
 about it. An ancient statue - it
 sounds just marvelous!

OGLANDER

Come, I'll be happy to show you--

LADY OGLANDER

(sharp)
 Not now, Stansfield!

ALFRED

Father, honestly.

LADY OGLANDER

(taking over)
 Mary, Theodore, won't you come with
 me to the dining room?

They start to go.

LADY OGLANDER (CONT'D)

Alfred, escort Emily, won't you?

ALFRED

(like he forgot she was
 there)
 Hmm? Oh yes, of course.

LADY OGLANDER

Come along, Stansfield.

They all head stereo left, leaving our heroes behind for a
 moment.

WARD

Perhaps I should just go crawl into that hole outside.

HALLIE

Don't you worry, Professor. We're delighted you're here.

MILES

At least Emily is entirely charming.

HALLIE

Isn't she? She's much too good for him.

MILES

I'll say.

WARD

How old is she?

HALLIE

Seventeen.

WARD

Poor thing. She could be one of my students.

MILES

Chin up! All right Ward, let's see what's next. After you, my darling.

MUSIC.

17 NARRATION

17

LESTER MAYHEW

After a strained but delicious meal, the Dowdswells departed for the evening, leaving the Oglanders and their guests in the drawing room....

18 POSTPRANDIAL

18

A CRACKLING FIRE. The CLINK OF GLASSWARE as Chalvers pours brandy.

CHALVERS

Brandy, professor?

WARD

Thank you, Chalvers. That's plenty for me.

CHALVERS

Very good, sir.

HALLIE

Our compliments to your staff, Lady Oglander. Dinner was wonderful.

OGLANDER

Nothing like a good spotted dick!

LADY OGLANDER

Stansfield!

HALLIE

And the Dowdswells seem a very fine family.

LADY OGLANDER

Yes, we've made a good match. Alfred's most fortunate.

MILES

You are very strong-minded people here on the island to have a wedding on a Friday. In London we are more superstitious; no man dare take a wife on that day.

LADY OGLANDER

Oh, please don't speak of it. If it were up to me, I would certainly have chosen another day. But Lord Oglander wanted it, and would not give way.

MILES

Oh no?

HALLIE

Eustace....

LADY OGLANDER

Suppose some misfortune should happen? There must be something in it, else why should everyone be afraid of a Friday? But Stansfield--

OGLANDER

Friday is the day dedicated to Venus.

(MORE)

OGLANDER (CONT'D)

An excellent day for a wedding. And now we have our very own Venus to oversee the nuptials. What an honor! Tomorrow, Ward, if you are willing, we'll offer her a small sacrifice before the ceremony. Two ringdoves and incense, if I can find any.

LADY OGLANDER

You'll do no such thing! Offering incense to an idol! What would the Dowdswells think? Or the vicar?

OGLANDER

Then let me put a wreath of roses and lilies on her head. "*Manibus date lilia plenis.*"

LADY OGLANDER

Don't you quote Vergil to me, Stansfield.

ALFRED

What's that?

WARD

"Let fly lilies with hands full."

ALFRED

Rot! Whatever's that supposed to mean?

OGLANDER

It means, young man, that I shall see to it your wedding is blessed by the god of this very place!

MUSIC.

19 NARRATION

19

LESTER MAYHEW

As the rest of the household retired for the night, Ward and his friends gazed out the window of his guest chamber....

20 THAT NIGHT

20

COUNTRY NIGHT AMBIENCE. The window in Ward's room lets in the evening breeze.

WARD

There she is, just across the yard, but we'll be lucky to get any time with her tomorrow. I'd go out right now if only there was light. At least I could work without... interference.

MILES

Do you really think darkness would keep Oglander away?

WARD

He certainly is... enthusiastic.

MILES

Yes, just let an English country squire learn some Latin, and suddenly he's an expert on everything!

WARD

A little knowledge certainly can be a dangerous thing. It can be good to let the imagination run free, but I sometimes wonder... no, never mind.

HALLIE

What?

WARD

I know some of my university colleagues regard my theories as rather outré. What if I sound to them like Oglander sounds to me? I don't want to be thought of as a crackpot.

HALLIE

I'm confident that's not the case.

MILES

I know what you mean. My own beliefs are sometimes held to ridicule. I rather suspect you yourself would mock them if you were any less polite than you are.

WARD

No, I--

MILES

It's all right, Ward. I understand. I believe in reincarnation because I can't help but do so. It's useful to me. I don't demand that anyone else believe it, any more than I demand them to be vegetarians. But I believe it because it gives me hope about life and the world. If reincarnation isn't true, then God can only be considered monstrously cruel.

HALLIE

I don't know if this will make you feel any better, Professor, but Lord Oglander's ideas might not be as baseless as they seem.

WARD

How's that?

HALLIE

While you were outside digging, I had a look into Lord Oglander's library. He has a number of books on the folklore of this island.

WARD

Oh really?

MILES

Leave it to my wife, Ward.

HALLIE

He had one out that described legends of the ancient islanders having intercourse, of a kind, with queer fish people. There were rituals and idols and all sorts of--

A SHARP WHISTLE FROM OUTSIDE cuts her off.

WARD

Who's that? Do you see anyone?

Some INDISTINCT MUTTERING from outside.

MILES

I think it's a pair of the stable boys. I dare say they've had a drink or two.

The voices of George and Rupert outside become clearer. They have stopped in front of the statue and talk to it as if it were a real person, in thick country English accents.

GEORGE

(distant)

Look here, you scrubber, you broke Tommy's leg for him! If you belonged to me I would have broken your neck!

RUPERT

(distant)

Bah! With what? She's made of iron, in't she?

GEORGE

(distant)

If I had my cold chisel I would jolly soon scoop out her big white eyes. I'd do it for a bob.

They move a few paces further off.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(distant)

Here, I got something for you, darling.

WARD

What is he doing?

MILES

Looks like he's fishing for a rock or--

GEORGE

Here, catch!

The CLANG of a stone hitting a hollow metal statue.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(distant)

That's what you--

The THUNK of a stone hitting George in the head.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(distant)

Ow! She threw it back at me!

The boys run off. Ward, Miles and Hallie laugh.

MILES

Ha! It bounced right off and hit him in the head!

WARD

Yet another vandal punished by the gods! Swift justice!

HALLIE

Miles, my love, it's late. We should--

MILES

Of course you're right. We'll bid you good night, Ward.

WARD

Yes. Good night to you both.

HALLIE

Sweet dreams, professor!

MUSIC.

21 NARRATION

21

LESTER MAYHEW

Bright and early the next morning, Nate Ward took a sketchbook into the garden to try to draw some pictures of the statue....

22 THE WEDDING MORNING

22

COUNTRY MORNING AMBIENCE. We start to hear OTHER GUESTS arriving in the background.

OGLANDER

Ah, Ward! I knew I'd find you here. You're just like me. You simply can't resist her, can you?

WARD

Good morning, Lord Oglander. Just trying to get some work done before I make a nuisance of myself to your poor wife.

OGLANDER

Ha! Let me know if you learn how to do that! I'll take lessons.

WARD

Are those flowers you've got there?

OGLANDER

Only some roses from the east garden.

(quietly)

Don't tell my wife.

(theatrically)

An offering to my Venus! May she grant to my son all he deserves on this special day.

(heartfelt)

I can never thank you enough, Ward, for finding her as you did. A miracle!

WARD

Oh, well--

OGLANDER

We shall soon rebuild her temple and restore her faded glory, what! Ah, here comes the groom!

ALFRED

Father.

OGLANDER

Already dressed for the occasion, I see.

ALFRED

Why not?

WARD

Good morning, Alfred. You look dashing. Those shoes are certainly... shiny.

ALFRED

Fancy yourself an artist, do you?

WARD

Not really, but one must--

ALFRED

You must take my wife's portrait. You know, if I didn't know you were drawing father's tedious statue, I'd think it was a portrait of my Emily.

Off stereo left, there's a SMALL ROAR OF APPLAUSE followed by the THWACK of a tennis ball. We hear MILES IN THE BACKGROUND coaching some tennis players.

ALFRED (CONT'D)

What's this now?

WARD

Ah, Miles was going to give the lads a few pointers in tennis. You know he's--

ALFRED

I know!

He storms off towards the court.

23

GAME, SET, MATCH

23

We cross over with Alfred to the tennis court, where a small crowd is watching. Miles' voice fades up as Alfred approaches.

MILES

...you see it's simply natural to turn, so your dominant leg is behind the non-dominant leg, and this is what we call the semi-open stance forehand. You're going to do this for balls that have a lot of penetration. No need to step forward on a ball like that. It will come to you if you only keep your cool. Here, Rupert, send another!

RUPERT

(off)

Yeah, all right!

THWACK! WHIZZ! THWACK! WHIZZ!

RUPERT (CONT'D)

(off)

Ah, blimey!

MILES

Very good! Do you see, George?

GEORGE

I think so.

POLITE APPLAUSE from the crowd.

MILES

Well done. Naturally I adjust my stance for lawn tennis. In real tennis, or royal tennis, the ball is quite different, and the attack is--

ALFRED

Of course, anyone can demonstrate good form in a lesson, but how about in a proper volley?

The crowd MURMURS.

MILES

Good morning, Alfred! Would you like to take Rupert's place?

ALFRED

No, he can stay, but I will join him. Show the people how an Olympic champion fares against two islanders.

Mixed APPLAUSE.

MILES

Certainly. In the spirit of good fun. Did you want to go change?

ALFRED

No. I'm ready.

MILES

Alright, then - the serve is yours.

A VIGOROUS TENNIS VOLLEY goes left and right. Six or seven hits later...

HALLIE

Well done, Eustace!

ALFRED

(furious)
Rupert, you clod!

The crowd APPLAUDS.

MILES

Well played, boys. You see--

ALFRED

Rubbish! If only Tommy were able to play, we'd show you how it's done.

(MORE)

ALFRED (CONT'D)

But he's been sidelined by that beastly statue!

MILES

No one is sorrier than I am about Tommy's--

ALFRED

I'm sure you're quite good, Mr. Miles, but then again you did lose the gold medal to that American.

The crowd MURMURS.

MILES

Now Alfred, let's just--

ALFRED

How about you, Professor? Would you like to play Mr. Miles? I'd say as an American you have a more than sporting chance.

WARD

Oh, please leave me out of it.

ALFRED

Ah yes, of course. You were both holding the rope that failed our Tommy, weren't you?

WARD

That was--

MILES

(insulted)

What are you playing at, Alfred?

ALFRED

Tennis, sir, if you're good enough to play against me. One on one.

Crowd MURMURS.

MILES

(his good nature tested)

Alfred, please. You're wearing a tailcoat and patent leather Oxfords from Savile Row.

ALFRED

So I am. And you're, what, forty years old? An Olympic also-ran? I, at least, have never lost a game.

(MORE)

ALFRED (CONT'D)

I'd say we're rather evenly
matched.

MILES

Why you insolent--

HALLIE

Eustace, don't--

Crowd MURMURS. The RUSTLE OF CLOTHING.

ALFRED

If it's my attire that puts you
off, Mr. Miles, that's easily dealt
with. Here! Rupert! Take this coat.
And these shoes! We must give the
Olympian hero no excuse to
withdraw. Now, sir, what do you
say? Will you play me?

The crowd MURMURS SOME ENCOURAGEMENT.

HALLIE

Eustace....

MILES

(grim)
Let's get this over with.

The crowd CHEERS. MUSIC! The THRILLING STEREO SOUNDS of two
really good tennis players trying to kill each other. The
crowd REACTS to the playing.

RUPERT

Fifteen love!

Shift focus to the sidelines.

RACHEL

Oh, Mrs. Miles! Can't you stop
this? Lady Oglander will be
furious. And Master Alfred in his
wedding clothes!

HALLIE

Too late now, Rachel, I--

RACHEL

A few minutes ago he hardly dared
turn his head, for fear of spoiling
his cravat. Now look at him. And
it's me who'll pay the price!

HALLIE
I really daren't interfere. You
know... men!

WARD
The boy's furious - I'll grant him
that.

HALLIE
I hate to say it, but Alfred really
is quite good. Hit it, darling!

A tennis ball GOES WHIZZING BY THEM. Crowd OOHS. It CLANGS
against the statue.

WARD
Mind the Venus!

RUPERT
Fifteen all!

ALFRED
(off)
Damn and blast it!

MILES
(off)
Terribly sorry, my dear.

HALLIE
(shouting)
We're all right! Nice return!

The CLATTER of a tennis racquet being thrown on the ground as
Alfred has a temper tantrum. Focus shifts back to the
players.

ALFRED
It's this cursed ring! It's
spoiling my grip!

MILES
(trying not to show his
fatigue)
Maybe all those diamonds weren't
such a good idea after all.

ALFRED
(frustrated)
I'll take it off. Aaaaaah!

Crowd MURMUR. MUSIC.

MILES
Do you yield, Alfred?

ALFRED
In no way! Aah! There! It's off.

WARD
Do you want me to hold it for--

ALFRED
You? I think not. Here, this wretched statue of yours has fingers. At least it can be good for something.

WARD
(quietly)
Alfred, do you really want to do this?

ALFRED
I do!

A CLINK OF METAL as Alfred puts the ring on the iron finger of the statue. MUSICAL PUNCTUATION.

ALFRED (CONT'D)
Ball, please!

Ward hands him the ball. Alfred STORMS OFF.

WARD
My god, a twenty-five hundred year old work of art reduced to a jewelry stand for a petulant brat.

HALLIE
Just leave it.

ALFRED
(off)
Play on!

MUSIC! More aggressive STEREO TENNIS. Enthusiastic STABLE BOYS CHEERING on Alfred.

RUPERT
(off)
Forty thirty!

ALFRED
(off)
Another to me!

THWACK! WHIZZ! THWACK! WHIZZ!

MILES
(in pain, off)
Aaah!

HALLIE
Eustace!

WARD
What is it?

HALLIE
His ankle. He's taken a bad step!

THWACK! WHIZZ! CHEERING FROM THE CROWD.

HALLIE (CONT'D)
Oh no!

RUPERT
Game!

ALFRED
(gloating)
Too bad, Miles. Second place again!
We must have another match, my fine
fellow. I'll give you odds next
time.

WARD
In America we call that being a
sore winner.

HALLIE
I won't repeat what we call it
here.

The crowd goes suddenly silent.

LADY OGLANDER
(apoplectic)
Alfred! What on earth are you
doing?

RACHEL
Oh no!

LADY OGLANDER
I simply can't believe my eyes!
Look at you!

ALFRED
Mother, I--

LADY OGLANDER
Sweating and disheveled! What's
become of your coat? And your
shoes!

RUPERT
Here, Ma'am. I'll just, eh...

LADY OGLANDER
What were you thinking? Stansfield!

OGLANDER
Yes dear, I tried to stop him, but
it was... Miles was...

LADY OGLANDER
Enough! We have to be at the parish
hall within thirty minutes for the
civil ceremony! The Dowdswells will
be waiting!

ALFRED
I just--

LADY OGLANDER
Go inside this minute and clean
yourself up. And you, Rachel,
assist him! Unbelievable!
Stansfield, meet me at the
motorcoach!

She STORMS OFF. A crash of THUNDER portends rain. The crowd
MURMURS and BREAKS UP. Miles WINCES in pain.

HALLIE
Take my arm, darling.

OGLANDER
Bad luck, Miles. Terribly sorry.
But, eh, well, duty calls I'm
afraid.

MILES
Of course. I understand, but I'm in
no shape to attend the ceremony,
I'm afraid.

OGLANDER
Nonsense! You'll be all right, you
just--

MILES
No, I'm afraid I've turned an
ankle. You all go on without me.

LADY OGLANDER
 (distant, furious)
 Stansfield! I AM WAITING!

MILES
 Go on! I'll be fine.

OGLANDER
 Frightfully sorry, old chap.
 He's... my boy.

LADY OGLANDER
 (distant)
 Stansfield!

Oglander rushes off.

MILES
 Go on, you two. Before it starts
 raining.

HALLIE
 Are you mad? I'm not going anywhere
 without you. Your ankle--

MILES
 Is fine. I simply have no intention
 of attending that boy's wedding.

HALLIE
 Then neither do I.

MILES
 But you must. For your parents'
 sake, the Dowdswells. It's why
 we're here in the first place. Go,
 please. My ankle is fine. It's only
 my pride that's been injured.

CAR HORNS HONK in the distance. THUNDER. Distant CHEERS as
 the Oglanders pile into a car.

OGLANDER
 (distant)
 Come along!

HALLIE
 Well I won't ride in a car with
 that boy.

WARD
 Come on, Hallie. I'll ride with
 Alfred. You go with his parents.

MUSIC. Antique MOTOR CARS DRIVE AWAY.

24 NARRATION 24

LESTER MAYHEW

The wedding procession made its way to the parish hall as a light rain began to fall.

25 THE BLUNDER 25

WHEELS CRUNCH IN GRAVEL as the cars pull up to the parish hall. A LIGHT RAIN is starting. KERFUFFLE as people get out of the Oglander's car.

OGLANDER

(off)

Come along, Alfred! Don't keep the ladies waiting in this weather! Ward, see to him, won't you? Let's get you inside, Fanny. Here's my brolly.

They go in.

ALFRED

Oh no.

WARD

What's the matter?

ALFRED

What a blunder! I forgot the ring! It is on your Venus's finger, devil take her!

WARD

Oh dear. That's--

ALFRED

Don't tell my mother, whatever happens. Perhaps she won't notice.

WARD

Maybe. Can you send someone for it?

ALFRED

(getting worked up)

No! My valet stayed behind.

(MORE)

ALFRED (CONT'D)

You can't trust these fellows with twenty-five hundred pounds of diamonds. Oh God, what if the Dowdswells notice?

WARD

It's all right. You still have your other ring. You can--

ALFRED

(panicking)

If anyone finds out the ring is on the statue they'll make fun of me, call me the husband of the statue. Oh that thing! If it wasn't for it, Tommy could have played and none of this would...

WARD

Alfred, calm down. You're shaking. It will be all right.

ALFRED

It won't! I should never have agreed to-- What if someone steals it? Twenty five hundred pounds--

WARD

That's not going to happen. Everyone's frightened of the statue. They won't go within arm's length of her.

ALFRED

(close to tears)

Professor, I... I'm sorry, I...

THUNDER.

WARD

It's all right, lad. Come on... let's get inside. Stiff upper lip, right? You'll use your other ring. In many ways it's much better anyway. Emily will... be very happy.

ALFRED

Do you think so?

WARD

Absolutely. Everyone gets nervous, Alfred.

(MORE)

WARD (CONT'D)

Now let's go before your mother comes looking for you, all right? I'm in enough trouble with her as it is.

WEDDING MUSIC.

26 NARRATION

26

LESTER MAYHEW

With the ceremony complete, the wedding party and guests returned to the Oglander mansion for a modest banquet.

27 WEDDING NIGHT

27

THUNDER AND RAIN outside. A STRING QUARTET plays music.

We move around the room, eavesdropping on various clusters of guests and family members.

GUEST 1

...he may be fierce on the tennis court, but Alfred looked like a frightened boy at the altar. Something's not quite right there.

GUEST 2

But the bride was radiant.

GUEST 1

Well, yes, but did you get a look at the ring? There was talk he'd spent two thousand quid on diamonds for it. That ring looked plain as day.

GUEST 2

Dunno. He did give her that fancy motorcar...

We shift focus to the Dowdswells.

THEODORE DOWDSWELL

...Roger Killock's little girl, what's her name....

MARY DOWDSWELL

Harriet.

THEODORE DOWDSWELL
Yes, Harriet. She seemed more than
a little cold.

MARY DOWDSWELL
And I haven't seen her husband at
all.

THEODORE DOWDSWELL
Oh, the tennis chap?

MARY DOWDSWELL
That's him. Perhaps they're having
a row....

Shifting to Ward and Hallie.

WARD
...Alfred really seemed genuinely
sorry about it.

HALLIE
As well he should.

WARD
Will Miles come down at all?

HALLIE
I suspect he'll sneak in at some
point. He won't want to pull any
attention from Emily....

Shifting to the Oglanders.

OGLANDER
...Really how long does it take the
girl to change from one dress to
another?

LADY OGLANDER
It's because it's a Friday. I told
you the wedding shouldn't have been
on Friday! It's just been one
disaster followed by the next. And
now the rain, it's--

The musicians start to play the Wagner Bridal Chorus.

OGLANDER
Ah, there she is at last!

LADY OGLANDER

But what on earth is she wearing?
Good lord, that gown must have been
plucked from her dead aunt's
wardrobe....

POLITE APPLAUSE as the bride and groom enter.

CHALVERS

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. & Mrs.
Alfred Oglander!

KNIVES CLINK ON GLASSES.

ALFRED

(now a bit drunk)
My wife! Our guests demand we kiss!

They KISS very publicly. APPLAUSE.

EMILY

Thank you, everyone. Thank you.

ALFRED

(seeming a little tipsy)
My bride: so pretty - and she's all
mine!

A RIPPLE of POLITE LAUGHTER. A knife RINGS off a crystal
goblet.

THEODORE DOWDSWELL

Ahem, the mother of the bride would
like to offer a word.

MARY DOWDSWELL

Friends and cherished guests and my
dear, sweet Emily. You look
incredibly beautiful and I wish
that you stay that way with your
new husband.

(overcome with emotion)

Forgive me.

(sniffing into a
kerchief)

I thought the day I married
Theodore was the happiest day of my
life, until the day that my Emily
was born. You have been such a joy,
my dear. I... I only wish... I only
wish my sister, your Aunt Eugenia,
were still alive to see you today.
She would be as proud of you as I
am.

(MORE)

MARY DOWDSWELL (CONT'D)

As the two of you embark on your new life together, I wish you and Alfred all of the happiness and peace in the world. Oh, Emily!

EMILY

Oh, mother!

THEODORE DOWDSWELL

Hear, hear! Let's have some music.

WEEPING and APPLAUSE. The MUSICIANS resume playing. CROWD CHATTER.

OGLANDER

Would have been better if we'd had dancing to go with the music.

LADY OGLANDER

That's enough, Stansfield.

OGLANDER

Time for another drink, my dear.

We segue over to Ward with Hallie.

HALLIE

Ah, Miles has come down, Professor. I'm going to see to him.

WARD

Very good. I'll have a word with the groom - he looks a bit glum.

HALLIE

Do you think he actually loves her?

WARD

I... I don't think it's for me to say.

Ward goes over to Alfred at the bar.

WARD (CONT'D)

Hello Alfred. I hope you're feeling better. Your new mother-in-law seems very nice.

ALFRED

(noncommittal)

Hmmmm. Not as nice as this champagne.

WARD
Yes. Maybe you've had enough.

ALFRED
(drunker)
Ha! Hardly.

WARD
You know, Alfred, when I was your
age I had some feelings that--

ALFRED
(leaning in quiet and
urgent)
Professor, I need your help.

WARD
(taken aback)
Do you feel ill?

ALFRED
No, but...

A ROAR of drunken LAUGHTER and CHEERS.

OGLANDER
(off)
Alfred!

WARD
We can talk in a bit - they're
about to do the ritual of the
garter. You're expected - go on.

In the background, there is the ritual of the garter, with
much CHEERING from the increasingly drunken crowd.

OGLANDER
(off, drunk)
Look at her blushing! Oh my dear!
(singing badly)
O Venus, beauty of the skies,
To whom a thousand temples rise...

What is the matter with me, my
friends? Has the champagne I have
taken made me see double? There are
two Venuses here....

ALFRED
What?

Alfred DROPS HIS GLASS and it SHATTERS.

The drunken crowd LAUGHS at Alfred.

OGLANDER

Steady on, my son! There are two Venuses under my roof. One I found in the earth, like a truffle, just yesterday. The other came down to us from the heavens to share her garter with us. My son, choose between the Roman and the English Venus which you prefer.

ALFRED

(mortified)

Emily, I--

OGLANDER

The rascal took the English, the better part, for the Roman is black and the English is fair. The Roman is cold, and this English beauty sets on fire all who come near her.

(to Emily)

Lift your skirts, dear...

(to Alfred)

Don't just stand there, you clod, remove her garter!

The drunken crowd LAUGHS AND CHEERS. Ribald and tasteless AD LIBS.

GUEST 1

Look at those ankles!

GUEST 2

Use your teeth!

OGLANDER

(hushed)

Get on with it!

ALFRED

(close to tears)

Ah, em, yes... well, eh...

He removes the garter from her thigh to a chorus of LUSTY APPROVAL from the crowd.

OGLANDER

(in the background)

Come, friends, into the salon for a toast to the bride before her night really gets started. Midnight approaches!

MUSICIANS PLAY AGAIN. The revelers follow Oglander and Emily off to the salon.

ALFRED

Professor.

WARD

Alright, what is it?

ALFRED

Don't laugh... but I don't know what is wrong with me.... I am bewitched!

WARD

I think maybe you've just had too much to drink.

ALFRED

This is something worse. You know my ring?

WARD

With the diamonds? Was it taken?

ALFRED

No.

WARD

Then you have it?

ALFRED

No. I... I couldn't get it off the finger of the statue.

WARD

Well maybe you just didn't pull hard enough.

ALFRED

No, the Venus... she clenched her finger.

WARD

Alfred, that's... You pushed the ring on too far. Tomorrow we'll try using pincers or something; it'll come right off.

ALFRED

(frightened)

No, I tell you. The Venus' finger contracted and bent up; she closed her hand. Seriously.

(MORE)

ALFRED (CONT'D)

She is my wife apparently, because I gave her my ring.... She will not give it back. Help me.

WARD

(after a pause)
You're so drunk.

ALFRED

You're an expert! You know all about these statues. Perhaps there is some spring, some devilish catch... If you would go and see....

WARD

(with a resigned sigh)
Sure. Come with me.

ALFRED

No, I would rather you went by yourself. I can't face it again.

WARD

Very well. Wait here.

As a drunken CHEER comes from the salon, Ward heads for the front door.

MILES

Ah, Ward. Heading out in the rain?

WARD

No, Alfred asked me to go check on the statue. Apparently he can't dislodge his ring from its finger. Says she's holding onto it and that now he's married to her.

HALLIE

Ha! Now that's funny.

WARD

Says the statue clenched its hand!

HALLIE

He's insufferable, isn't he?

WARD

I think he's--

MILES

That poor, lovely girl - sold off in a marriage of convenience!

HALLIE
Sold to a boorish oaf.

MILES
Don't waste your time, Ward. Surely
you don't believe his story?

WARD
Well, no...

MILES
I certainly don't believe it, and
I've written a book about
reincarnation! He's either just
blind drunk or he's trying to play
you for a fool. He blames you for
that statue as well, you know.

More drunken LAUGHING and SINGING from the salon.

OGLANDER
(from the salon)
Alfred! Get in here, boy!

LAUGHTER from the salon.

HALLIE
Nothing would amuse him more than
to make you run out into the rain
on his say-so.

MILES
Just go to bed and be done with
these dreadful people. That's what
we plan to do.

WARD
You're right. Of course. I came
here for the archaeology and got
drawn into all this wedding
madness. Tomorrow I'll be headed
home to Arkham.

MUSIC. THUNDER.

LESTER MAYHEW
That night, Nate Ward drowsed off
over his notes and books from Lord
Oglander's library. His rest was
disturbed by noises outside his
room.

29 NIGHT NOISE

29

Through Ward's door, we hear MUCH COMING AND GOING, DOORS OPEN AND SHUT, CARS DRIVE AWAY, ETC. Then the lighter STEPS OF SEVERAL WOMEN WALKING DOWN THE PASSAGE PAST WARD'S DOOR. THUNDER and LIGHTNING!

WARD
 (to himself)
 What are they... Oh, leading Emily
 to bed.
 (he shudders)

MUSIC. Then HEAVY STEPS COMING UP THE STAIRS. The wooden stairs CREAK LOUDLY.

WARD (CONT'D)
 Marital enthusiasms, my foot!
 (yawning)
 Poor thing.

THUNDER yields to music of TROUBLED DREAMS.

30 MORNING AFTER

30

Ward WAKES with a start.

WARD
 What now....?

MUSIC. STRANGE TRAMPINGS in the hallway. Then BELLS RINGING. DISTANT CRIES OF FEMININE DISTRESS. RUNNING FOOTSTEPS. INARTICULATE CLAMOR OUTSIDE.

Ward jumps out of bed.

WARD (CONT'D)
 Did that idiot set fire to the
 house?

Ward OPENS THE DOOR of his room. From the end of the hall he hears COMMOTION.

LADY OGLANDER
 (wailing)
 My son! My son!

Ward RUNS DOWN THE HALLWAY and runs into Rachel.

WARD
 My god, Rachel, what happened?

RACHEL
 It's Alfred, Professor.
 Something... terrible!
 (Ward goes)
 I wouldn't go in there if I was--

EMILY
 (from the bridal chamber,
 wailing in terror)

Ward rushes in.

OGLANDER
 Wake up, Alfred!

Oglander is SLAPPING his son's face.

WARD
 Lord Oglander! Please. That's no
 use. The boy is dead.

Emily, Lady Oglander, Lord Oglander all wailing and weeping.
 Servants shocked. Emily tries to get up.

WARD (CONT'D)
 No, Emily! Rachel, get her out of
 here - take her downstairs. You
 there, George, help her.

A TUSSELE. Emily, SOBBING, staggers out on George's and
 Rachel's arms.

OGLANDER
 No, he's not dead! He can't be!

WARD
 He... he is, sir.

OGLANDER
 But how? Why? I see no blood, I see
 no--

WARD
 There are bruises on his sides and
 back. The look on his face.... I'm
 so sorry. Maybe you should...

OGLANDER
 My god! One would think he's been
 crushed by a band of iron.

WARD
 Yes....

OGLANDER
What's this, on the floor?

MUSIC HIT

WARD
It's... the diamond ring.

FRESH WAILING. Ward takes charge.

WARD (CONT'D)
Chalvers, you men, take the Lord
and Lady back to their chambers.
Call... the authorities.
(gently to the Oglanders)
There's nothing you can do here,
sir. Let's--

OGLANDER
But we--

LADY OGLANDER
My son! My sweet boy! I won't leave
his side!

WARD
You have a daughter now, ma'am.
She'll need your care. Chalvers, a
hand here.

CHALVERS
Yes, sir. This way, madame.

OGLANDER
Come, Fanny. Look away, my love.

They go out WAILING. Miles and Hallie show up.

HALLIE
Professor?

MILES
What's going on?

WARD
(suspicious)
Where have you been?

MILES
We went for an early walk. Couldn't
sleep with all the ruckus last
night. What's happened?

WARD
Alfred is dead.

MILES
What?

HALLIE
Oh my god!

WARD
Emily is beside herself - so are
the Oglanders. Rachel's taken her
downstairs. Hallie, perhaps you
could sit with her?

HALLIE
Of course.

She hurries out.

MILES
Ward, what happened?

WARD
He's been killed. It...
(flailing to describe it)
it's as if he was run over by a
car.

MILES
How can that be?

WARD
See for yourself.

He lifts a sheet off Alfred's corpse.

MILES
Good heavens. Ward, what's going on
here?

WARD
I really don't know. Wait here with
Alfred, will you? I need to have a
word with poor Emily.

MUSIC.

31 NARRATION

31

LESTER MAYHEW

In the drawing room, Ward found the traumatized Emily sitting with Hallie and the housemaid, Rachel.

32 THE INTERVIEW

32

RACHEL

I gave her a tot of brandy to calm her nerves, poor thing.

WARD

Well done, Rachel. Thank you. Emily? Are you all right?

EMILY

I'm not injured, if that's what you mean. It didn't get me.

HALLIE

It? What didn't get you, dear?

EMILY

I can't say. I didn't see it properly.

HALLIE

But there was someone in your room?

EMILY

(fighting off tears)
Some... thing! It was...

HALLIE

There, there. It's all right now. You're safe.

RACHEL

Here, love. Have another sip.

HALLIE

What did you see? It's all right. We're here to help you.

MUSIC.

EMILY

I was in the bed, with the curtains drawn. My mother had spoken to me about... my duties... you understand.

HALLIE

Of course.

EMILY

I was... I never... I didn't know what to expect. I heard someone come in. I assumed it was Alfred.

HALLIE

Naturally.

EMILY

I wanted to... please him. He's been so... was so... I was nervous. I turned away toward the wall. Couldn't bring myself to look at him.

HALLIE

Of course.

EMILY

The bed creaked with an enormous weight. Some... something sat down. It was very... confusing. It seemed too heavy to be Alfred, but I... wasn't sure... I... was too frightened to turn and look.

HALLIE

What happened then?

EMILY

I just sat there, frozen, I... don't know how long. Five minutes... ten.... At last I moved, or maybe the other... person moved. Anyway I felt a touch of something. It was cold. Cold as ice!

HALLIE

Oh my.

RACHEL

Good lord above!

WARD

Did you hear anything, Emily?

EMILY

(terrified)

I... I...

HALLIE
What did you hear?

EMILY
Suddenly the door opened again and
someone said "Good night, my little
wife."

HALLIE
What? Alfred?

EMILY
The person next to me in the bed
sat up and stretched out its arms.
I... turned to look. Alfred...
was... on his knees by the bed.
He... was in the arms of a greenish
black looking... giant who was
strangling him with all its might.
I would swear it was...

HALLIE
The statue!

EMILY
Yes!

WARD
That's.... impossible. You must
have dreamed it.

HALLIE
Professor--

EMILY
No. I fainted, but when I woke up
again I saw it. On the bed. Holding
Alfred's lifeless body in its arms.
It... it looked right at me! That
face! That cruel face!
(weeping)
It rose up, dropped poor Alfred on
the floor and went out. I pulled on
the bell and...

She SOBS softly.

RACHEL
Saints preserve us! The devil's
been in this house!

HALLIE
It's all right, Emily. Shh...

WARD

Rachel, when did you last see
Alfred last night?

RACHEL

I saw him going upstairs to his
wife, sir. He looked wet, like he'd
been outside in the rain.

WARD

Outside?

RACHEL

He asked after you sir. I said I
hadn't seen you, and he made the
strangest answer.

WARD

What do you mean?

RACHEL

He sighed and said "Well, the devil
must have carried him off too!"

WARD

Carried me off too? Did you see if
Alfred had his diamond ring on?

RACHEL

(after a pause)

I don't think so. You can't help
but see that ring.

WARD

Yes...

SIRENS sound in the distance.

RACHEL

The police! Thank god they've come!

MUSIC.

33

NARRATION

33

LESTER MAYHEW

The authorities collected the dead
body of Alfred Oglander and took
statements from people in the
house. The storm clouds had gone,
and the morning was clear and
bright. Ward, Hallie and Miles
approached the iron Venus.

COUNTRY MORNING AMBIENCE. DISTANT HUBBUB of investigation.
CAR DOORS, etc.

WARD

She's still here. Looking very much
like we left her yesterday, don't
you think?

HALLIE

Emily's right - that face is quite
cruel.

MILES

Look here, Ward. Footprints in the
mud. They lead away to the house,
and then right back here.

WARD

Alfred's, I should think. He came
out to get the ring, and returned
inside.

MILES

These look too deep to be Alfred.
They were made by something...
heavier.

WARD

Miles... it's been raining, the
ground is...

HALLIE

What do you think happened,
Professor?

WARD

I... don't know. There must be some
perfectly rational explanation,
but....

MILES

But?

WARD

But I admit at the moment I can't
think of one. That's going to gnaw
at me.

MILES

"Cave complexum."

HALLIE

What's that?

MILES

It was a warning Ward found.
"Beware her embrace."

WARD

(stunned)

My god....

HALLIE

What?

WARD

The connection. It was staring me
in the face the whole time, but I
was so blinded by science I didn't
see it.

HALLIE

I don't understand.

WARD

Archaeologists, we study things
that have been buried by time. By
the forces of nature, the forces of
history. We dig them up to learn
from the past.

HALLIE

Yes?

WARD

This thing was buried on purpose.
Whatever happened at Bouldnor, the
Romans brought it here and buried
it precisely so it wouldn't be dug
up. Some things are meant to stay
buried.

MILES

Ward...

WARD

My god. I got that boy killed.

HALLIE

No, Professor!

MILES

See here, this was none of your
fault, old bean.

OGLANDER
(Distant)
Professor, ahoy! Miles!

HALLIE
Here come the Oglanders! Shall I--

WARD
No, Hallie. You've done enough of
that. Thank you.

OGLANDER
(very subdued)
Miles, Harriet. Professor.
Commiserating with my Venus, I see.
The police inspector says you're
free to go whenever you like. With
my great thanks.

WARD
No, Lord Oglander, I--

MILES
We're all terribly sorry for your
loss, Lord Oglander. Lady Oglander.

HALLIE
I know I can speak for my parents
when I say you have our deepest
condolences.

LADY OGLANDER
Thank you.

OGLANDER
Thank you, my dear. My driver can
take you back to Bembridge. I'm
sure you'll understand if I can't
show you the rest of the island, as
promised.

WARD
Of course. It's time for me to head
back to Arkham.

OGLANDER
Will you publish, Ward? A
monograph, perhaps, about my Venus?
My... beautiful Venus?

WARD
I wouldn't know what to say.

LADY OGLANDER

(tearful)

That hateful thing! Stansfield, you should have that cursed horror melted down and turned into a bell for the church.

OGLANDER

Oh, Fanny! That would be a crime against history. And it wouldn't bring our boy back to us.

LADY OGLANDER

But every time we heard it ring, we could remember--
(she breaks down weeping)

OGLANDER

Tell her, won't you Professor Ward? We couldn't possibly melt our Venus down, could we?

SAD MUSIC takes us back to the HOTEL LOBBY.

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RETURN OF THE BEMBRIDGE SCHOLARS

35

LOWELL

God, Nate, what a horrible choice. What did you say to them?

WARD

Mm? I told them I could never encourage anyone to destroy an artifact, of course. But... I wouldn't blame them if they did.

LOWELL

Hmm. Was there ever any explanation for what happened to the boy?

WARD

Ha, explanation? Between us, Lowell, the more explanations I get, the more I realize I don't know anything. Scientia non est sapientia.

LOWELL

Knowledge--

An IRON CHURCH BELL RINGS in the distance.

WARD

Knowledge and wisdom are not the same thing.

The CHURCH BELL leads into SAD CLOSING MUSIC.

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CONCLUSION

36

LESTER MAYHEW

You've been listening to "The Iron Maiden", brought to you by our sponsor, Veronal.

LULLABY SINGERS

Take Veronal tonight and sleep, sleep, sleep.

LESTER MAYHEW

Veronal. The sandman's little helper. I'm Lester Mayhew. Until next week, this is Dark Adventure Radio Theatre reminding you to never go anywhere alone; if it looks bad, don't look; and save the last bullet for yourself.

MUSIC.

ANNOUNCER

"The Iron Maiden" was adapted for radio and produced by Sean Branney and Andrew Leman. Based on "The Venus of Ille" by Prosper Mérimée. Original music by Reber Clark. The Dark Adventure Ensemble featured Annie Abrams, Yeni Alvarez, Sean Branney, Ken Clement, Matt Foyer, Larissa Gallagher, Andrew Leman, Dick Lizzardo, David Pavao, Patrick Quinlan, Zak Robertson, Kevin Stidham, Josh Thoemke, Sarah van der Pol, and Time Winters. Tune in next week for "Conquest of the Coffin Worms," a terrifying tale of mortuary malfeasance!

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Radio STATIC and fade out.

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