

SUSPENSE

"THE DARK TOWER"

ORIGINALLY BROADCAST MAY 4, 1944

Transcribed by The Indefensible Craig Gustafson for "Those Thrilling Days of Yesteryear" old time radio recreations.
www.ttdyradio.com

Before reading the script, please go to end for important notes on the text.

CAST

The Man in Black:

Announcer:

"Salud!" Man:

"Your Health, Señor!" Man:

Damon Wellington:

Ben Weston:

Jessica Wellington:

David Torrence:

Aunt Martha:

Stanley Vance:

Max Hartsfeld:

(THEME MUSIC. AFTER FOURTH BELL:)

ANNOUNCER

Roma Wines present...

THE MAN IN BLACK

Suspense!

(THEME MUSIC ESTABLISHES, THEN:)

ANNOUNCER

Roma Wines. Made in California for Enjoyment Throughout the World.

(SFX: GLASS CLINK)

"SALUD!" MAN

Salud!

"YOUR HEALTH, SEÑOR!" MAN

Your health, Señor!

(SFX: GLASS CLINK)

ANNOUNCER

Roma Wines toast the world. The wine for your table is Roma Wine. Made in California for Enjoyment Throughout the World.

(THEME MUSIC; TRIPLETS START, FADE UNDER)

THE MAN IN BLACK

This is the Man in Black, here to introduce this weekly half-hour of... *Suspense!* Tonight from Hollywood we bring you Mr. Orson Welles. Mr. Welles will appear as star of the *Suspense* drama called *The Dark Tower*, from the play by George S. Kaufman and the late Alexander Woollcott. But before we raise the curtain on this evening's tale of *Suspense*, here is a message from your host, the Roma Wine Company of Fresno, California.

(MUSIC OUT)

ANNOUNCER

Let us picture a scene in the fashionable restaurant *El Patio* in Havana, Cuba. From the next table, we hear a Cuban judge of fine wine describe in glowing terms the wonderful climate and soil of our own California. When his American guest points out that his Cuban host has never been to the United States, the Cuban answers, "Well, it's true I've never visited your California, but from only such perfect wine country could come sherry of such superb quality that we have enjoyed. Roma California Sherry!"

Yes, by their examples, wine connessiuers of many other lands tell you that in Roma Wines are all the great qualities that must be present in a wine for great enjoyment. It's for this reason that wine experts of other lands import Roma Wines from great distances, to be enjoyed as a rare luxury. But for you, this luxury of other lands becomes a daily pleasure. Because you can enjoy any of Roma Wines' taste appealing wine types without additional charge for import duties, and expense shipment from great distance. These two great Roma Wine features, superb quality and small cost, have made *Roma Wines* America's largest selling wines. I'll spell out the name for you. R. O. M. A. Roma Wines! Made in California for enjoyment throughout the world.

(THEME MUSIC IN, UNDER)

THE MAN IN BLACK

And now, with *The Dark Tower*, and with the performance of our star, Orson Welles, as that noted actor Damon Wellington, scion of the celebrated Royal Family of Stage and Screen, we again hope to keep you in... SUSPENSE!

(MUSIC BRIDGE INTO SCENE)

DAMON

(Very deep, rich, theatrical voice. Pompous; dare I say, a ham?) You dare! You dare call me a ham! Varlet! I will prove to the World there are no brains in that thick, Teutonic skull! I'll cleave it open like an Over Ripe Melon!

(SFX: KNOCKING ON THE DOOR)

DAMON *(cont'd)*

Who thus profanes the rehearsal of the lines? Enter, if thou art man of woman born! I fear thee not!

(SFX: DOOR OPENS; MAN STEPS IN)

BEN

Hello, Damon.

DAMON

(drops the Shakespearean tone; well, as much as he can...) Ben Weston, you old son of a gun! I heard you were back from the coast. What news of the Rialto from that Cesspool of the Arts known as Hollywood? Have they turned my picture to the wall at the Brown Derby yet?

BEN

No, it's still there.

DAMON

I despise myself for wanting to know, of course. It's marvelous to have you back, Ben, old boy. Seen Jessica yet?

BEN

Yes, I've seen her.

DAMON

Isn't she looking fine? Feeling better than she has for years, I think. We've got a great thing in this play, Ben. Changed a bit from the original, of course, sort of a satire on the family. Perhaps it might be more dignified to say that the family is a satire on the play.

BEN

Yes, I heard about it.

DAMON

For instance, those lines you heard me declaiming as you entered. Actually happened to me, you know, that German What's His Name who directed *Macbeth*, he called me a *ham*. And I chased him out of the theatre and for four city blocks, in full costume, with a two-edged sword.

BEN

Damon...

DAMON

There's a little thing I like in the second act, too. Jessica asks me why I don't stop drinking and I say, "What?! Would you have me subsist entirely on *food*? And reach the Gargantuan Proportions of an *Orson Welles*? (*chuckles*) That ought to needle the "boy wonder", eh, Ben?

BEN

Damon, can't you stop clowning for a minute... ?

DAMON

Of course I can. "Oh, what a rogue
and peasant
\ slave am I..."

BEN

Damon, please. Please be serious.

DAMON

What's the matter, old man?

BEN

You know as well as I do what's the matter.

DAMON

No, frankly, I can't say that I do. To me the world looks rather well.

BEN

Does it? And Jessica... "feeling better than she has for years." Is she?

DAMON

Well, isn't she?

BEN

Of course not. How could she be?

DAMON

And why shouldn't she be?

BEN

Damon, don't you realize there's been a murder?

DAMON

Oh, to be sure, so there has... and a good thing, too, if you ask me. What of it?

BEN

"What of it?" Can't you see that this thing is hanging over this house like a... like a curse?

DAMON

I hadn't noticed anything hanging over this house, profane or otherwise.

BEN

And what about Jessica?

DAMON

Oh, I suppose it's bound to upset her a little, but she's really in fine shape, Ben. She's going to be marvelous in this play...

BEN

There's more at stake in this than the play, Damon. The thing has never been solved. Perhaps it never will be...

DAMON

Perhaps that's just as well.

BEN

(a beat) But Jessica can't remember. Don't you understand, Damon? She can't remember.

DAMON

(so what?) Well then, Jessica can't remember.

BEN

Listen to me, Damon. I wouldn't mind it if it was just that other people thought she might have done it. They would have done that anyway. But... but... *she* does.

DAMON

Aw, come on, Ben, I don't believe it.

BEN

I've talked to her, Damon, I know.

\
Damon, I love Jessica more than anything else in the world, you know that.

DAMON

Oh, please...

DAMON

Yes, Ben, I do.

BEN

Well, this way I... I couldn't...

DAMON

You couldn't marry a murderess, eh? I should think it would be rather *exciting*. Now that you mention it, I rather wish *I* had. Instead of some of those I *did* marry...

BEN

Damon...

DAMON

(*sincerely*) I'm sorry. Pretty serious to you, isn't it, old man?

BEN

Did you think it wouldn't be?

DAMON

To tell you the truth, Ben, I haven't thought about it at all; that's the trouble with being an actor: as long as your part's good, you don't give a hang about the rest of the play. Have you told Jessica?

BEN

Yes. We had a long talk.

DAMON

How did she take it?

BEN

You know Jessica, she carried it off, of course.

DAMON

Mmmm. Ben, you know in spite of all our histrionic bickering, I'm rather nuts about Jessica myself.

BEN

I know you are, Damon.

DAMON

I have no very fundamental objections to you, either. I would describe you, my dear Benjamin, as Adequate.

BEN

Thanks.

DAMON

So I think perhaps you and I had better have a nice, long heart-to-heart talk.

BEN

What good will talking do?

DAMON

I think if you do the listening and let me do the talking, you'd see. Lend me your ears; I will a tale unfold!

(MUSIC BRIDGE)

DAMON

Well, Jessica, as you know, had been in a sanitarium for nearly a year. She hadn't been on the stage in more than two years. *The Dark Tower* was to be her first attempt to work again. All that time... I know it isn't the greatest play in the world, but it has a surefire box office appeal. Jessica needed that to get her confidence back. Well, we were just polishing up a few last minute changes here at the house... David Torrence, the producer, you know, he was there with us, and of course there were the usual little (*fading out*) differences of opinion...

(MUSIC UP STRONG, THEN OUT)

JESSICA

(a fireball) And another thing, Damon. When you kick me in the middle of the second act...

DAMON

(amused) Where?

JESSICA

You know *perfectly well* where...

DAMON

(an amused snort)

JESSICA

Is it absolutely essential that you boot me halfway across the stage?

DAMON

(irked) What do you want me to do? Pull my punches? That's one of the high spots of the show!

JESSICA

It may be a high spot to you, *Dahhhling*, but it's just a black and blue spot to me.

DAMON

Very well. Henceforth I shall appear for the second act on crutches! *(to David)* You know, Uncle David, that's not a bad idea!

DAVID

(moaning) Oh, now Damon, let's be
ser---

\
--ious. There's a lot of work to do.

DAMON

I'm quite serious. I could throw 'em
at her.

JESSICA

You might try throwing me a cue once in a while! What's the use of having a play if you just make up the lines as you go along?

DAMON

The critics thought my ad-libbing very witty. Remember, dear?

JESSICA

Oh, Damon, you're such an Insufferable Ham!

DAMON

A Ham? A *HAM*?!

\
Me, a HAM!?

DAVID

Now now now, children, *please*...

DAMON

I fail to see why I should permit that little minx to insult me with impunity, David!

JESSICA

How *dare* you speak to me that way!?

DAMON

You started it!

JESSICA

I did not!

DAMON

You started! You called me a *ham*!

JESSICA

And you are! Ham, ham, HAM!!!

DAMON

Minx, minx, MINX!!!

MARTHA

(fading in and rolling her "r"s) Stop that brawling!

DAMON

But soft... what light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Martha is the sun!

MARTHA

I quite agree.

DAMON

What?

MARTHA

That you're a ham.

DAMON

Gad! I am beset by Harpies!

MARTHA

David. Haven't you any control over these hirelings of yours?

DAVID

Ohhh, I'm only the producer, my dear Martha. You at least are a member of the family.

MARTHA

And you at least can quit!

JESSICA

We're terribly sorry, Aunt Martha. We've been a nuisance, I know, and I apologize. Damon, I even apologize to you.

DAMON

Don't be silly, Jess ---

JESSICA

I've been much the worse, I know; but I've really been terribly keyed up. Working again. And... you know... Ben is coming east for the opening...

DAMON

Ugh. *Love* rears its ugly head.

MARTHA

Don't be horrid, Damon.

JESSICA

It's all right. I couldn't be even angry if he was. Anyway, I'll have a husband to protect me by this time next week.

DAMON

I could lick him with one hand tied behind me.

JESSICA

Damon, seriously. I know I owe you an awful lot.

DAMON

Me?

JESSICA

I hadn't actually realized how far I'd gone. These last six months have been like... coming alive again. The play... and Ben. Thanks, Damon.

DAMON

(muttering, appalled) Good lord...

JESSICA

Now, I think I'll dress for dinner. Let's all go out to din...

(SFX: PHONE RINGS)

JESSICA *(cont'd)*

... I'll get it. Aunt Martha, where would you like to go?

MARTHA

To a rest home.

(SFX: PHONE IS PICKED UP)

JESSICA

Hello? *(Her face turns pale, even though we can't see it)* Who? No. No, he's not here. *(starting to break down)* He's not here, I tell you. He's... dead.

(SFX: PHONE IS HUNG UP)

(Jessica sobs)

MARTHA

Oh, darling... what is it?

JESSICA

(forcibly calming herself) It was... for Stanley.

MARTHA

For Stanley...

JESSICA

Yes.

MARTHA

Never mind, darling, it's all right. Just some fool who didn't know.

JESSICA

Of course. *(still shaken)* Damon, you take David and Martha out to dinner, will you? I think I'll lie down for a little while...

DAMON

Ah, come on, Jess, you mustn't let a little thing like that upset you...

JESSICA

I know, but... I'm awfully tired. *Please...*

(SFX: HIGH HEELS TROTting AWAY)

MARTHA

Jessica!

(SFX: DOOR SHUTS)

DAVID

You'd better leave her alone for a while, Martha.

MARTHA

I suppose so.

DAVID

It was for... Stanley Vance, the husband, huh?

MARTHA

Yes.

DAVID

He's dead, you say?

DAMON

You might as well tell him about it, Martha.

MARTHA

I was always for telling about it.

DAVID

You don't have to.

MARTHA

I'd rather. He was the cause of her breakdown, of course.

DAMON

Should have been an actor. That's why Jessica married him.

MARTHA

She married him because he *forced* her to marry him.

DAVID

Huh?

MARTHA

He controlled that girl's mind like
some sort

\
of fiendish hypnotist

DAMON

My dear Martha, I've always said that
if Jessica was fool enough to *marry* a
psychoanalyst...

MARTHA

Damon, stop playing the Heartless Brother. You saw what Stanley did to her...

DAMON

I was in Hollywood.

DAVID

Perhaps that's why Damon *went* to Hollywood, eh?

DAMON

(not pleased about feeling guilty) Wellll... what could one do? She was legally married to the man. She'd listen to no one but him.

MARTHA

Here's what happened, David. She went to this fellow to be psychoanalyzed; and in the process, something happened. I don't know what it was, but Vance acquired a power over Jessica's mind that was utterly inhuman. He married her, quite frankly, to have her support him. Then he found he'd overplayed his hand and sent her into a complete mental collapse. When he found he couldn't snap her out of it, and she was no longer a source of revenue to him, he simply decamped.

DAVID

Hmm. You say Vance is now dead?

DAMON

We heard the Happy News about six months ago. Some Public Benefactor had shot him. I always meant to look that fella up.

MARTHA

From that very day, she began to get better. From the moment she heard the news. It was as though a spell had been lifted.

DAVID

Hmm. And now she's practically all well.

DAMON

You know, it's odd to have someone phoning for him after all these months.

MARTHA

Probably the Sheriff, just catching up.

(SFX: DOOR BUZZER)

DAMON

I wonder who that could be.

MARTHA

(Apprehensive) Damon...

(SFX: DOOR BUZZER)

MARTHA *(cont'd)*

... you don't suppose...

(SFX: DAMON'S FOOTSTEPS)

DAMON

I'll go. It may be a peasant with a petition....

(SFX: DOOR OPENING)

(MUSIC STING!!!)

STANLEY

(Charming) Good evening!

DAMON

(Completely charmed) My dear Martha, you are positively psychic! *(beat)* The Honorable Stanley Vance.

(SFX: DOOR CLOSING)

STANLEY

*(Smug, insufferable; Dr. Smith from **Lost in Space** when things are going his way)* Thank you. I trust the shock will not be too great.

DAMON

One knoweth not the place nor the hour when the bridegroom cometh, does one?

STANLEY

My luggage will be here shortly.

MARTHA

Listen to me, Stanley Vance ---

STANLEY

(overriding her) Good evening, Martha! I regret to arrive so unceremoniously; I have been ill.

DAMON

So we have been told. We had been assured, however, that your illness was *fatal*.

JESSICA

(fading in) Damon, I thought I... *(beat; horrified)* Stanley.

STANLEY

Jessica! My poor, poor darling!

JESSICA

(now overjoyed) Stanley!

STANLEY

Oh, but you're ill, aren't you? You should be resting. You're tired and exhausted, aren't you? Terribly... terribly... tired. Aren't you?

JESSICA

(slightly dazed) Yes. I *am* tired.

DAMON

Oh, *great!*

JESSICA

Terribly tired.

STANLEY

I'll take you up to your room, darling.

I take it we still have the same

\
room, Martha.

MARTHA

Listen to me, Stanley Vance...

STANLEY

The poor girl! You can see how *weak* she is.

MARTHA

If you think you're going to stay under this roof for a single minute --- GET OUT!!!

STANLEY

Very well, if you insist on being inhospitable, Martha. *(to Jessica)* You'll pack your things, Jessica. We'll go to an hotel. *(not a typo; he said "an hotel.")*

JESSICA

(A zombie in love) Yes. Yes, Stanley.

MARTHA

Jessica...

JESSICA

Martha, I'm... so tired. Will you help me, Stanley?

STANLEY

Of course I will, my dear. Come along.

MARTHA

Stanley.

STANLEY

Yes, Martha?

MARTHA

All right, Stanley. You win.

STANLEY

Ah. You're asking us to avail ourselves of your hospitality, Martha?

MARTHA

Yes. You can stay.

STANLEY

That's *very* sweet of you, Martha. Isn't it, darling?

JESSICA

Yes. Yes, Stanley.

MARTHA

But somehow, someday, there'll be a Time of Reckoning for you, Stanley Vance!
And until it comes... keep out of my sight!

(SFX: STANLEY & JESSICA WALKING AWAY)

STANLEY

The pleasure will be all mine. Come, darling, we'll go to our room now.

(SFX: DOOR OPENS)

JESSICA

Yes, Stanley.

(SFX: DOOR CLOSES)

MARTHA

Damon.

DAMON

Yes, my Agèd Auntie?

MARTHA

Damon, what are we going to *do*?

DAMON

I dunno what *you're* going to do, Ducky, but *I'm* going down to the Lamb's Club and have a quadruple Scotch and soda.

(MUSIC BRIDGE; ESTABLISH, THEN UNDER)

DAMON *(cont'd)*

You may think it heartless of me, but during the next few days I simply stayed away. I think you'll understand my reasons later. As for Jessica, she was of course completely in his power again and about a week later there appeared upon the scene a gentleman who was destined to play a very substantial role in our little drama. I think you've already met him; at least on one occasion.

(SFX: PHONE RING)

STANLEY

I'll get it, Jessica darling.

(SFX: PHONE PICKUP)

STANLEY *(cont'd)*

Hello? No, Mr. Damon Wellington isn't here. Can I take a message, please? Mr. Max Hartsfeld. Hartsfeld. I'll tell him you called, Mr. Hartsfeld. I really couldn't say. Well, you can come up and wait, if you like, of course, but I can't promise he'll see you. Very well; goodbye.

(SFX: PHONE HANGUP)

STANLEY *(cont'd)*

Jessica?

JESSICA

Yes, Stanley?

STANLEY

Do you know any friend of Damon's named Max Hartsfeld?

JESSICA

No, Stanley.

STANLEY

(wondering) He seemed extremely eager to see him; he said he'd come up here and wait.

JESSICA

Oh. I see.

STANLEY

It's no matter. Tell me, darling, have you been feeling a little stronger these last few days?

JESSICA

Yes. I think perhaps I am, Stanley.

STANLEY

But of course you're not ready to go back on the stage again, are you, darling?

JESSICA

No. Of course not, Stanley.

STANLEY

Poor darling!

(SFX: DOOR OPENING)

DAMON

(singing) ...Oh no, it isn't a breeze, it's Love in Bloom... *(speaking)* Well, my little lovebirds! How are you two? How are you, Jessica?

JESSICA

A little stronger, I think. Am I a little stronger, Stanley?

STANLEY

Of course you are, my dear. Uh, Jessica, I think you'd better leave us now. There's something I want to talk over with Damon.

JESSICA

Yes, Stanley.

STANLEY

I'll see you again very shortly, darling.

JESSICA

Yes, Stanley.

(SFX: DOOR SHUTS)

STANLEY

Well, Damon, I've been waiting to talk to you for some time.

DAMON

Really? I wish I could say the same.

STANLEY

I suppose you realize, Damon, that it's out of the question for Jessica to go on in the play in her present condition.

DAMON

Oh, come to the point, will you, Vance? I have a pressing engagement with a *pin-up girl*, and I have got to change into my *Zoot. Suit*.

STANLEY

No, seriously, Damon. I know you somehow connect me with Jessica's condition.

DAMON

By an odd coincidence, I do; what of it?

STANLEY

I know it would make you and everyone very happy if Jessica *could* go on in the play.

DAMON

Ah ha, the light at last illuminates me addled wits. So it's a *shakedown*! A shakedown, is it, Stanley?

STANLEY

My dear Damon, I really don't know
\
what you're talking about.

DAMON

Look here, my Larcenous In-Law, I've been shaken down by experts on every conceivable account including the Mann Act in my time and I can smell 'em a mile away.

DAMON (*cont'd*)

What you propose is that for certain Financial Considerations, you will leave this Happy Home, Jessica will recover and she can go on in the play. The answer is no!

STANLEY

There won't be any play without her,
\
Damon.

DAMON

Are you suggesting that *my name* is not sufficient to draw the suckers?

DAMON (*cont'd*)

I can get a dozen people to play Jessica's part. Margaret O'Brien, Marjorie Main, Daisy, Agnes Moorehead, makes no difference to me; anybody at all.

STANLEY

Don't try to bluff me, Damon. After all this build-up, you won't *dare* to go on without Jessica.

DAMON

You little know me, *Stinky*. You may consider your little farce as having closed on opening night. As for Jessica, I'm very much afraid that she's made her bed and now she'll have to lie in it. There's no cure for her, short of murder, with yourself as the victim, and I do not propose to put my head in the hangman's noose. Good night!

STANLEY

I think you'll see things my way
\
a little later, Damon.

DAMON

Bard Forbid! By the way, did I have any calls?

STANLEY

Oh, yes. A Max Hartsfeld called.
\
Said he was coming up here to wait for you.

DAMON

(*disagreeably surprised*) Max Hartsfeld?

DAMON (*cont'd*)

Good heavens, *when*?

STANLEY

He's on his way now, I imagine.

DAMON

Look, tell him I'm out, will you, or gone to Hollywood... fella's been pestering me all week. Wants to buy into the show and I simply don't want to see him!

STANLEY

So he wants to buy into the show...

DAMON

Yes, he does not share your *lamentable* lack of faith in my talents, Stanley, he's *dying* to buy into the show.

STANLEY

Does he know Jessica won't be able to appear?

DAMON

Of *course* he does, you idiot. Everybody does; don't you read the trade papers? And now, good night, Repulsive. I have Other Fish to Fry. Toodle-oo, Flattop!

(SFX: DOOR SHUTS)

STANLEY

(a beat) Jessica? Oh, Jessica, my dear...

JESSICA

I'm coming, Stanley.

STANLEY

Tell me, Jessica. *The Dark Tower*, this play you were going to appear in with Damon... you have an interest in it, don't you?

JESSICA

Yes... yes, I think I do.

STANLEY

An equal interest with Damon.

JESSICA

With Damon.

STANLEY

How much do you suppose that interest is worth, Jessica?

JESSICA

A hundred thousand dollars. I think.

STANLEY

A hundred thousand dollars, huh?

JESSICA

Yes. That was it.

STANLEY

Have you thought about what you're going to do with it now that you can't appear in the play yourself?

JESSICA

No, Stanley. I haven't.

STANLEY

You see, I'm not at all sure the play will be a success without *you*, Jessica.

JESSICA

I don't know, Stanley.

STANLEY

And so it might be wise to sell your share of it before it opens. Don't you agree, Jessica?

JESSICA

Yes.. yes, I do agree.

STANLEY

And Jessica, if I could find a buyer -- and I think perhaps I can -- it might be best if I were to handle the details for you; don't you think?

JESSICA

Yes, Stanley. You handle it.

STANLEY

And the fact of the matter is, there's a man coming up here this evening, a friend of Damon's. Max Hartsfeld. Do you remember, I asked you about him?

JESSICA

Yes...

STANLEY

It won't be any trouble to you, darling. All you have to do is sign the necessary papers.

(SFX: DOOR BUZZER)

STANLEY *(cont'd)*

Oh.

(SFX: STANLEY CROSSING TO DOOR AND OPENING IT)

MAX

(high-pitched, crotchety German accent; slight asthma) Excuse me. Is this the residence of Mr. Damon Wellington?

STANLEY

Mr. Hartsfeld.

MAX

Yes.

STANLEY

Oh, come in, please.

MAX

Thank you.

(SFX: DOOR SHUTS)

MAX *(cont'd)*

Mr. Wellington is at home?

STANLEY

No. And we don't expect him. But he's discussed with me the reason for your visit, and I think perhaps you and *I* can reach a satisfactory agreement.

MAX

You are... ?

STANLEY

Stanley Vance. I'm Miss Wellington's husband. And this is my wife.

JESSICA

How do you do?

MAX

How do you do? *(mumbling)* I'm very happy to make your...

STANLEY

Sit down, please, Mr. Hartsfeld. May I have your hat and coat?

MAX

Thank you.

STANLEY

And your gloves, please.

MAX

(slight chuckle) Oh, I... I am sorry. It's an eccentricity, perhaps, but I always keep them on.

STANLEY

Oh. *(beat; pressing on)* Now, Mr. Hartsfeld, Damon tells me that you wish to buy an interest in the new Wellington play, *The Dark Tower*.

MAX

Yes, I have been seeking an interview with Mr. Wellington.

STANLEY

Yes, so he's told me. However, Damon has made up his mind not to sell any part of his interest in the play.

MAX

You are sure of this, Mr. Vance?

STANLEY

Oh, quite sure. I had a long talk with him about it only this evening.

MAX

I see. I will not conceal from you that this is a source of great disappointment to me, Mr. Vance. I have such a deep admiration for the talents of Mr. Wellington. I... ventured in a few previous theatrical enterprises, now at last, I hoped, I...

STANLEY

I quite understand your feelings, Mr. Hartsfeld, and I think that... *I* may be able to help you.

MAX

Yes?

STANLEY

Yes; you see, Damon owns only *half* of the Wellington interest in the play. My wife, Miss Jessica Wellington, owns the other half. And she -- we -- if the offer were sufficiently attractive...

MAX

Ahh... indeed. You are willing to sell, then, Miss Wellington?

JESSICA

Yes. Whatever Stanley says.

STANLEY

Good. Then, perhaps we should get down to details, eh?

MAX

Yes, Mr. Vance.. Miss Wellington, I fear you will think me vevy wude, but...

STANLEY

Not at all. What is it?

MAX

Since the talents of Miss Wellington's brother must be considered the very essence of our bargaining, and since you are acting as her agent in any event, I wonder if she will forgive me if I ask that you and I conclude this part of our business... alone, Mr. Vance?

STANLEY

Oh, of course! Jessica will understand perfectly. Won't you, my dear?

JESSICA

Yes, Stanley.

STANLEY

Run along then, darling. I'll call you when we need you.

(SFX: JESSICA WALKING AWAY)

JESSICA

Yes, Stanley.

(SFX: DOOR SHUT)

MAX

Now, Mr. Vance, I imagine you will wish to know a little more about the man with whom you are dealing, here is my card, I'm staying at the Waldorf, I've written the room number on the card for you...

STANLEY

Oh, there's no need, really...

MAX

Yesss. *(beat)* But before we discuss terms, there is one other thing...

STANLEY

Yes?

MAX

I wonder... you do not know me, do you, Mr. Vance?

STANLEY

Know you?

\
Why, I...

MAX

You do not know why I have been looking forward with such pleasure to an interview with you? Alone?

STANLEY

Why... no. I... I...

MAX

Well, it is very simple. It's very simple, really, Vance. It's just that I... *(doesn't quite know how to... oh, hell, just say it:)* I'm going to kill you.

STANLEY

(beat; puzzled, and not in a good way) Pff. To... kill me? *(Must be a joke...)*
Really, Mr. Hartsfeld...

MAX

With... these two hands. And before you die... *(His weak voice grows stronger:)*
Before you die... *(It's Damon's voice:)* I want you to know the *reason*.

STANLEY

(Gasps! Shit! It's Damon!)

DAMON

Jessica!

STANLEY

No! No, no, you ca--- *(his voice is cut off by strangulation)* *(Gargled Strangling Sounds, please, John)*

(MUSIC STING!!! INTO BRIDGE)
(FADE OUT BRIDGE)

DAMON

So you see, Ben, there's your murderer: Mr. Max Hartsfeld. And I hope you're duly grateful to him. An *elusive fellow*, Hartsfeld. The police have been trying to find him for two weeks. They never will... *(in Max's voice:)* Left no fingerprints, you see... he always kept his gloves on. It's an... *eccentricity*. Heh heh heh heh...

BEN

(With growing horror) Damon...

\
Wait a minute...

DAMON

(muttering; enjoying the role) An *eccentricity*...

BEN

Do you mean *you*... ?

DAMON

(Still Max's voice) My dear Mutt-- *(his own voice)* My dear Muttonhead! Listen, darling, the whole thing's *Perfectly Clear*. It's as plain as the putty nose on Max Hartsfeld's face.

BEN

I still can't get it into my head...

DAMON

Benjamin, if you don't know who Max Hartsfeld is by *now*, you are the only person... within the sound of my voice who does not.

BEN

You mean you impersonated... ? Then it wasn't Jessica!

DAMON

Jessica? (Chuckles) She never could have done it; the girl has *talent*, but no genius.

BEN

But Damon... *murder*...

DAMON

"Murder," he says. (*Ultra-Shakespearean*) Dear friend: you share with me a Guilty Secret. Your Lips are Sealed. Come!

(MUSIC: STORY CLOSER)
(MUSIC: CLOSING THEME)

MAN IN BLACK

Suspense!

ANNOUNCER

Suspense is produced and directed by William Spier.

(MUSIC OUT)

ANNOUNCER (*cont'd*)

It is a significant fact that when lovers of truly fine food gather in many a far corner of the world, there you may well find Roma Wines lending their subtle magic to the greater enjoyment of living. They furnish a Gracious Prelude to any meal. A flavor-complementing delight during the meal, and even at desert time, too. For Truly, the Exquisite Flavor of Roma California Wines, used in cooking and also served with the food, can make even the Simplest Everyday Meal the Simplest Entertaining. A Special Occasion treat. Discover for yourself how much Far Famed Roma Wines can add to your meals. And delight your friends when you entertain. Remember: Roma Wines are almost Unbelievably Inexpensive for wines of such Distinguished Character. Only pennies a glassful. Ask for R. O. M.

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MAN IN BLACK

Next Thursday, same time, you will hear Lucille Ball in...

(MUSIC STING)

MAN IN BLACK *(cont'd)*

Suspense!

ANNOUNCER

Presented by Roma Wines. R. O. M. A. Made in California for Enjoyment Throughout the World.

(THEME MUSIC)

ANNOUNCER *(cont'd)*

This is CBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System.

THE END

NOTES ON THE TEXT:

Overlapping: There are several instances of overlapping dialogue. When this occurs, I've put both sets of dialogue alongside each other. When the first person has a backslash mark (\) in his/her speech, that's when the second person starts talking. The first person should not regard that as a break, but let the speech flow naturally.

Emphasis: Particularly for Damon. General emphasis is indicated by *italics* or by Special Capitalization. But Damon has words and phrases that are underlined. The secret to making this script work is that Orson Welles was having such an evident blast doing the show. The underlined phrases are things that he *just loved* rolling around in his mouth. They are said with extra-special relish. His delight at being given the term "zoot suit," for instance, is almost boundless. He played a ham by *being* a ham. Then he turned around and was very quiet & diffident as Max Hartsfeld.

