

LORD ARTHUR SAVILE'S CRIME - LADY SYBIL'S AUDITION PIECE

ARTHUR: Oh, Sybil, I am the wretchedest of men.

SYBIL: (moving to him) Arthur dear, don't look like that. What is it? What's troubling you?

ARTHUR: Sybil, you remember Mr Podgers?

SYBIL: The palmist? Yes, of course.

ARTHUR: He read my hand.

SYBIL: I know, dear. Mama told me. A happy, uneventful life . . .

ARTHUR: Oh, if only that were true!

SYBIL: He told you something more?

ARTHUR: Much more. Sybil, I must confide in you or go mad.

SYBIL: Confide in me, dear.

ARTHUR: He told me . . . I was to commit . . . a murder.

SYBIL: A murder ! Oh, my poor darling!

ARTHUR: Imagine my cruel dilemma. On the brink of marrying you, the sweetest girl in the world, I was told this dreadful thing. But in a moment, my mind was made up. I would commit this crime before our marriage, so that no shadow of infamy or disgrace should fall across our married life, and you should never have to hang your head in shame for me.

SYBIL: Oh, Arthur, how noble of you.

ARTHUR: I know.

SYBIL: (enthusiatically) When did you do it?

ARTHUR: Do what?

SYBIL: The murder.

ARTHUR: (deflated) Well, I - I haven't exactly done it yet.

SYBIL: (disappointed) Oh, Arthur, you've had nearly a week.

ARTHUR: I tried, Sybil. I did try. I prepared a subtle poison for my Aunt Clementina. By accident - I swallowed it myself.

SYBIL: (severely) But, darling, how careless of you. You knew it was poison.

ARTHUR: No, I didn't. At least, I did, but I didn't know it was where it was at the time. Really, Sybil, I thought you'd be more sympathetic. I've been seriously ill.

SYBIL: I'm sorry, dear. I was just a little disappointed. Did it hurt much?

ARTHUR: They said it was painless. That was a vile lie. And then I was operated on with a stomach pump. Oh, Sybil, never let anyone use a stomach pump on you.

SYBIL: Never mind, Arthur, it couldn't have been a very good poison or you wouldn't have recovered. What are you going to try next?

ARTHUR: I wish I knew. For three days I've lain on my bed of pain, thinking - thinking - thinking.

SYBIL: And what have you thought?

ARTHUR: Nothing.

SYBIL: Oh. That doesn't help us very much, does it?

ARTHUR: It's much more difficult to commit a murder than people think.

SYBIL: Oh, but darling, dozens of people do it every day who haven't had half your education.

ARTHUR: Yes, but those are the ones that are found out. I want to keep mine strictly private.

SYBIL: (thoughtfully ) What about history? There are lots of murders in history.

ARTHUR: Y-yes.

SYBIL: Arthur, I know. Mary, Queen of Scots.

ARTHUR: (after a stern mental effort) No.

SYBIL: Why not?

ARTHUR: I don't have an axe.

SYBIL: No, darling, not that. Her husband Darnley.

ARTHUR: What about him?

SYBIL: She blew him up on their honeymoon.

ARTHUR: He didn't have very long, did he?

SYBIL: They laid a train of gunpowder to the house, and then went off to a ball and left him in bed. While they were away, the house blew up.

ARTHUR: What a rotten honeymoon.

SYBIL: Couldn't you do something like that?

ARTHUR: Well, I didn't really want to go about blowing up houses. It's so conspicuous.